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RETURN OF THE NATIVE:
POSTCOLONIAL MIGRANCY AND THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF THE NATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

DECEMBER 2002

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For Gabriel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The migrant's life is a life of debts. I owe my first debt of gratitude to my parents, Elisa and Adolfo, from whom I have learned the infinite possibilities of a migrant existence. To Rui, Tó, Leo, and Maggie, I could not have hoped for better fellow travelers. My thanks also to Lori, Ed, Yuri, Kenji, Chiyoko, and Sunao for making me feel welcomed. I owe an enormous intellectual debt to Sankaran Krishna, Michael J. Shapiro, Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller, Cynthia Ward, Manfred Henningsen, Kathy Ferguson, Nevzat Soguk, John Witeck, Noenoe Silva, Eric Ishiwata, Konrad Ng, and Gina Pusateri. If every traveler has a guiding star, Sasha has been mine. I could not have found my way through this dissertation without her.

ABSTRACT

The refusal of the native's entelechy assumes two distinct forms. In the first, the native is a prop in a colonial mise-en-scène. As colonial travelogues attest, though present, the native seldom rises above the threshold of recognition. His proximity to nature is so total as to defy recognition. In the second, the native is recognized only insofar as his proximity to nature renders him an anchor in an evolutionary meta-discourse. The native's presence is interpreted as validating a taxonomic scheme that produces Europeans as a genus apart. In both representational forms, the negation of the native's potentiality is imbricated in the construction of the nation as the site of identity and difference through an organic discourse that transforms territory into an epiphenomenon of landscape.

Post-World War II movements of capital and populations across national borders have profoundly altered conceptions of the political. These dislocations have introduced ever-widening social and political imaginaries that challenge the nation-state's function as the locus proper of sovereignty. Consequently, the native's symbolic import, as a concept-metaphor that moors identity to the nation, is disrupted.

Using postcolonial migrancy not only as a concept that denotes spatial movement, but as a philosophical disposition, the dissertation interrogates the consequences for the nation and the

narratives of difference it enables when they encounter the postcolonial native as a nomad whose presence denatures the link between nation and identity. The dissertation argues that encounters between nation-states and postcolonial migrants result neither in the total enclosure of the natives nor in the evisceration of the nation. Rather, the encounter gives rise to a fractal politics that resists the sedimentation of identities into established political and cultural communities. The recursive structure of migrancy results in complex political formations. These are always already in the process of being deterritorialized, engendering associations and movements that exceed the narrow bounds of the nation-state.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

'Your story isn't going anywhere,' mum said, in the dark.

'A story is not a car,' dad replied. 'It is a road, and before that it was a river, a river that never ends.'¹

My dissertation takes its title, *Return of the Native*, from Thomas Hardy's 1878 novel.² Unlike Hardy's returning native, however, the native with whom I am concerned is a nomad. My subject is thus neither nativism as a marker of belonging nor of entitlement, but the native as a haecceity.³ I am interested in the native's self-referential/self-identical quality as a source of terror that disrupts the post-imperial socio-political order. For insofar as the native's haecceity presences a resistance to an enfolding into the self/same, the European imperial project sought to contain the native's affirmative difference through narratives of social evolution, which construe differences between Europeans and natives not as qualitative, but as

¹ Ben Okri, *Songs of Enchantment* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 266.

² Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³ For a discussion of haecceity, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 260-265.

quantitative: it is not a difference of species, but of genus. In these taxonomies, nations are enclosures that preserve striated fields of difference: they are the loci of foundational identities. Late-modern migrancy disrupts these formations. Postcolonial native migrants challenge the nation's production of negative difference. Through a series of themes that I will elaborate below, my dissertation interrogates what happens to the nation and the narratives of difference it enables when they encounter the native as a nomad whose presence denatures the link between nations and identities.

The refusal of the native's entelechy takes two distinct forms. In the first, as Mary Louise Pratt suggests, the native is a prop in the colonial *mise-en-scène*. This, she contends, explains why natives are too often invisible in Western travelogues.⁴ In these works, the native's proximity to nature is so total as to defy recognition. In the second, the native is recognized only insofar as his proximity to nature renders him an anchor in the evolutionary meta-discourse. Put differently, representations of the native's actions and instincts validate a taxonomic scheme that produces Europeans as a genus apart. In both representational forms, the erasure of the native's potentiality is imbricated in the construction of the nation as

⁴ See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and*

the site of identity and difference through an organic discourse that transforms territory into an epiphenomenon of landscape.⁵

In the canon of narratives that subsume identities to landscapes, Hardy's *Return of the Native* is singularly important. Serialized at the height of British imperial expansion, it offers a fully developed articulation of landscape as an organic entity that actively inscribes itself on its inhabitants. Egdon heath, the novel's landscape, is as much a character as Diggory Venn or Eustacia Vye. The novel's protagonists are not only rooted to the heath, but are defined by their relationship to it. Their feelings for Egdon oscillate between two extremes: Vye abhors every aspect of the heath, while Clym Yeobright, the novel's returning native, immerses himself in its every detail. However positioned to the heath, Hardy represents his characters' temperaments and relationships as extensions of the heath's ontology.

Egdon heath has two distinct roles in the novel. First, it demarcates a national, socio-political space by addressing the social and political possibilities of Victorian England. For

Transculturation (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁵ As Eve Darian-Smith argues, the notion of territory, articulated both in terms of frontiers and boundaries, were and continue to be inscribed in terms of the landscape's natural features. Mountains, rivers, and other topographical markers are often cited as the natural borders of a nation-state. See Eve Darian-Smith, *Bridging Divides: The Channel and English Legal Identity in the New Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 71-76.

Eustacia, the tragic heroine, the heath exists in a metonymic relation to a marriage market that limits her choices and binds her to her own personal hell.⁶ She is caught in a “paradox of personal identity”: she would not be who she is were it not for her dream of escape.⁷ The impossibility of her social mobility defines her as a tragic character and inextricably binds her to the heath.

Second, the heath speaks to an imperial disquiet. Against an earlier, sacred cartography, colonial movements away from Europe were fraught with danger.⁸ Foremost among these was the inherent threat of the loss of self. Colonial narratives evince this fear in the recurring trope of insanity. A byproduct of a confrontation with the Lacanian Real, an encounter with an “Other” that “escapes governing by the sociosymbolic order,” colonial zones of encounter were often portrayed by Europeans as spaces of madness.⁹ These were zones where Europeans, left to

⁶ For the role British novels played in exploring the relationship between marriage markets and the nation-state, see Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (New York: Verso, 1998).

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 189.

⁸ For a distinction between secular and sacred cartographies, see Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographic Distance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁹ For a discussion of the Lacanian Real, see Robert P. Marzec, “Enclosures, Colonization, and the Robinson Crusoe Syndrome: A Genealogy of Land in a Global Context,” *boundary 2* 29, no. 2 (2002). For a provocative exposé of madness in the colonial contact zone, see Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the*

their own devices, devolved to a barbaric state.¹⁰ As I suggest in chapter 3, this is most salient in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad characterizes Marlowe's movement down the Congo River by a growing madness that culminates in the encounter with the physical signs of Kurtz's murderous dementia. While Conrad renders Kurtz's insanity an effect of his distance from Europe, the fever and delirium the Congo awakens in Kurtz, a subject to which I return in chapter 5, promises to escape the boundaries of the jungle, a possibility that threatens to destabilize the colonial symbolic order.¹¹

Against this threat, Hardy uses the heath to erect a foundational self. As Simon Gatrell writes in the introduction to Oxford's World's Classics edition of *The Return of the Native*:

The heath is not only a vividly evoked environment, it also contains an energy which is felt by all who dwell on it, an energy with the power to change the natures of those who are at

Exploration of Central Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000). See also Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Houghton Mufflin Company, 1998).

¹⁰ Aimé Césaire reflects on this when he notes that the colonial project worked to "decivilize" Europeans. Refracting Hegel's master-slave dialectic, he argued that the inhumanity of Europeans to the colonized explains, in large part, the fascism Europe experienced during the Second World War. See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

¹¹ See László Máthé-Shires, "Imperial Nightmares: The British Image of 'the Deadly Climate' of West Africa, C. 1840-74," *European Review of History* 18, no. 2 (2001).

all receptive to it.¹²

Hardy inverts the relationship of the landscape to its residents by making the heath an actor in the novel, a landscape that cannot be domesticated by its inhabitants. Those who dwell on Egdon heath do not cultivate it as much as they are cultivated by it. This conception of landscape transforms national identity into ontology. In assigning the heath a transformative capacity, Hardy inoculates British national identity against the unsettling effects of colonial encounters. For while those who travel outside the United Kingdom's borders are susceptible to the madness of the wild, the U.K. itself is protected insofar as its identity is ontic.

While the heath's ontic existence places it beyond time, Hardy's production of Egdon is decidedly ontological. Put differently, Egdon's historical evolution closely follows changes in British identity construction. For though the novel begins with a generalized conception of the heath – a composite of rural English landscapes with no exact geographical anchors – with each successive edition the heath assumed a more defined territoriality. Hardy does not, however, situate the heath directly: he does not provide his readers with Egdon's precise coordinates. Rather, through an oblique cartographic exercise,

¹² Hardy, xv.

Hardy introduces into succeeding editions of *The Return of the Native* the names of towns and landmarks that border the heath. He thus locates the heath in a network of exchanges, delimiting its spatial and temporal boundaries.

The novel's movement from a fluid to an enclosed landscape bespeaks a preoccupation with the colonial project's nomadic impulse. The opening of England to imperial commerce fueled an industrial and social revolution that threatened to disrupt its domestic order.¹³ The economic, social, and political exchanges between the colonies and England not only endangered Britain's aristocratic order, but also imperiled its national imaginary. As Said notes of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the colonies promised new vectors of social mobility that disrupted the enduring feudal conception of the social.¹⁴ Hardy's writings sought to manage the effects of colonial nomadism, which both sustained and threatened his mythic landscape, by enclosing the heath. As Robert Mazec suggests,

The colonialist/imperial opposition between a self who is governed by an unruly nomadic impulse and one who has domesticated this impulse by becoming an agriculturalist (settler) is a structural imperative of Western teleological narratives of identity formation: The movement of nomadic desire

¹³ For a discussion of the impacts of the imperial project on English social order, see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Said, xv-xviii.

must come under control through the commodification of that desire in a colonist apparatus.¹⁵

The enclosure of the heath thus not only constrained movements, but also differentiated those who derived their livelihood from cultivating the English soil from those who made their living in the colonies. This distinction extended beyond mere degrees of English-ness. It inscribed territory, through landscape, in the construction of a national identity.

Enclosures did not, however, displace the landscape's ontic and mythic function. In his essay on the Robinson Crusoe Syndrome, Marzec argues that,

Within the logic of enclosure, instead of the human subject being "set up" by the land, the human subject sets up the land, territorializes it with its positive presence, places an individual name upon the land. Land is deprived of its foundational offering, and that foundation subsequently is placed within the self.¹⁶

The "juridical transformation of the Self from 'inhabitant' to 'tenant' or 'landlord'," he maintains, displaced the landscape from its function in the mythopoetic construction of identity.¹⁷ What emerged is a notion of property rights that "overcodes the land, placing on the land a gridwork of oppositions, not only inside versus outside, but by extension, individual against

¹⁵ Marzec: 132.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 142.

¹⁷ Ibid.

individual, ethnicity against ethnicity, nation against nation.”¹⁸ Absent from Marzec’s juridical reading is the symbolic scaffold that makes possible the commerce between territory and landscape. As he recognizes of labor, enclosures inaugurated forms of regimentation that disciplined bodies as they did land. He writes:

Subsidized by the larger ontology of enclosure, the field of temporality – like the soil of the land – is subjected to efficient cultivation and the demand for a higher yield.¹⁹

The will-to-power evinced in enclosures exhibits a cartographic anxiety that fixes peoples and places within rigid spatial and metaphysical grids. That is, it operates, in a matrix of negative difference, to erect categories that distinguish between peoples as a function of the landscapes they inhabit.

Marzec’s notion of enclosures is limiting. His analysis rests on too literal an understanding of boundaries. For him, enclosures and cultivation are premised on the necessity of physical divides. However, as chapter 4 suggest, boundaries are seldom physical. The most insidious borders are those that rest on notions of mythical and civilizational differences. In *Bridging Divides*, Eve Darian-Smith offers a powerful illustration

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.: 145.

of the co-presence of symbolic and physical divides.²⁰ In her exploration of the law as a “social practice” that bridges and separates communities, landscape plays a central role. She maintains that the law, perceived as a narrative, is bound to “particular discursive spaces.” Thus, in England, the European Union’s legal blurring of physical and symbolic boundaries manifests in anxieties about the relationships between law, territory, landscape, and identity. The Channel Tunnel, as an affirmation of the English “loss” of sovereignty, gives rise to narratives of resistance that construe, in the connection between landscape and identity, an imaginary that distinguishes Britain from France and the rest of the EU.

Debates about the Tunnel’s impact on English sovereignty turn to Kent, as England’s mythical garden, to structure an essentialist identity narrative. Kent’s disposition in these narratives mirrors that of Hardy’s heath. As noted above, Hardy’s depiction of the heath moves between an open and an enclosed landscape. This movement endows the heath with a semiotic value that locates it both inside and outside of time. Kent’s location in the English imaginary closely follows this semiotic structure. As Darian-Smith suggests, Kent’s position in the English imaginary is an artifact of the modernist nostalgia

²⁰ Darian-Smith.

for an idyllic past. The industrial revolution that propelled Britain to the center stage of the imperial global order transformed its landscape. The English manor gave way to railways, steel mills, and concrete roadways. However, against these advances, Kent remained in the popular imagination as “a mysterious secret garden and an accessible scene of pastoral tranquility.”²¹ Kent is thus a synecdoche for England, its landscape synonymous with England’s imaginary landscape.

The preoccupation with Kent as a site of permanence is not mere nostalgia. Rather, its synecdochical structure is an extension of the association of landscape and identity. The connection of Kent with the English garden erects - through the metaphor of the garden - an essentialist identity. As Darian-Smith writes,

The ideals of garden orderliness, containment, and control are, perhaps more than ever, powerful and appropriate symbols, not only for the people of Kent, but for England and its representation of the whole of British nation.²²

The civility that defines English gardens is seen not simply as a manifestation of individual will, but rather as an extension of the English “superior legal order.” The garden is thus both the signifier and signified of British common law. As such, its roots are lost in time. Hence, Darian-Smith contends, by the end

²¹ Ibid., 41.

of the eighteenth century,

It was impossible to segregate perceptions of English law from the idealized English landscape and culture through which authority, power, and class relations were inscribed across the whole of Britain, as well as being visually and aesthetically affirmed through gardens, public parks, and town planning.²³

The garden signals “both change and the continuities of tradition.”²⁴ Kent, as the garden of England, is both a reflection of British attributes and the source of that which constitutes Britain as a nation.

The association between landscape and identity not only structured Europe’s national imaginary, but also was the governing motif of the ethnographic and anthropologic discourses that informed its colonial expansion. For Europeans, to know the landscape was to know the native. Ironically, this formation became a constitutive element of anti-colonial struggles. Anti-colonial writers like Aimé Césaire adopted the same construct in their mythopoesis. Césaire’s negritude, evinced most strongly in his *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, responded to colonial representations not by deconstructing their territorializing gestures, but by populating the landscape with a Calibanic native. That is, though Negritude was presented as a “cri

²² Ibid., 46.

²³ Ibid., 34-35.

²⁴ Ibid., 51.

Nègre," a movement that embraced Africa and Africans in their most elemental, it was, at bottom, a cry profoundly informed by a colonial anxiety about identity. This stands at odds with Césaire's understanding of the poetic aim of *Cahier*. Speaking about the *Cahier* in a UNESCO interview, He notes:

Disinterring memories, all that was buried, bringing it back, presenting it so that it bursts forth fully formed upon the world – I think this sends an important signal. To express, not suppress, the force of one's reaction, to wield reinvigorated words as a miraculous weapon against the silenced world, freeing it from gags that are often imposed from within.²⁵

While the *Cahier*, as he suggests, means to exhume memories, the landscape out of which these memories arise was already the product of colonial entanglements. This sense, though not fully realized, is already present in his work. When he speaks of himself as "a man of germination," he is perhaps aware that the nation for which he speaks exists only as a reaction to Europe.²⁶ It is a prefigured landscape.

This formulation continues to find purchase in present articulations by First Nations/Native peoples.²⁷ Much like their

²⁵ Annick Thebia Melsan, "The Liberating Power of Words," *UNESCO Courier* 50, no. 5 (1997): 5.

²⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Cahier D'un Retour Au Pays Natal/Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 171.

²⁷ For a discussion of the role of land in indigenous nationalism, see Claudio Lomnitz, *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism*, ed. Dilip Gaonkar and Benjamin Lee, Public Works

anticolonial predecessors, the drive to call attention to the West's continued usurpation of their lands and resources has drawn a direct connection between their identities and the landscape they inhabit. While there is an obvious necessity and political immediacy to these claims, their overly territorial anchor constrains the natives' political possibilities by narrowing the horizons of their allegiances.

Against these articulations, my dissertation argues that the postcolonial present has introduced a new native. The emergent native is no longer a product of the narrow association between landscapes and identities. Rather, the failure of nationalist enterprises in much of the Third World, resulting in unprecedented rates of migration from the former colonies to the metropolises, has produced a crisis of identity in the West.²⁸ This has given rise, for example, to the simultaneous celebration of hybrid and multicultural identities and the widespread panic over the "collapse" of Western identity. These streams are present in the British Queen's paramnesiac assertion that "We also take pride in our tradition of fairness and tolerance – the consolidation of our richly multicultural and multifaith society, a major development since 1952, is being achieved remarkably

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 35-57.

²⁸ See Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

peacefully and with much goodwill.”²⁹ In a less celebratory note, they are equally present in Jean-Marie Le Pen’s contention that “Massive immigration has only just begun. It is the biggest problem facing France, Europe and the world. We risk being submerged.”³⁰

While the end of European empires inaugurated the migrancy to which the dissertation speaks, it has been accelerated by the compression of time/space, a product of the technological and commercial flows associated with globalization. Debates about globalization maintain that the West is the political and economic center from which all cultural attributes flow. Hence, it is, for example, possible to speak of globalization as a political, cultural, and economic phenomenon that is neo-colonial or American in its forms. This analysis, however, leaves unexamined the ways in which all culture and politics are products of encounters. That is, the West is not the place from which culture flows. Rather, it is but a node in a complex network of migrancy that shapes politics, culture, and economy.

Hence, I use postcolonial migrancy as an entry into the discourse between the striated space of nation-states and the

²⁹ *Full Text of the Queen's Jubilee Speech*, (BBC News, 2002, accessed 2002); available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1959753.stm.

³⁰ Hugh Schofield, *Profile: Jean-Marie Le Pen*(BBC News, 2002, accessed 2002); available from

smooth spaces engendered by the native's nomadism. That is, contrary to much of the scholarship on migrancy, I am less interested on the manner in which nation-states appropriate the native's nomadism to restructure statist spaces.³¹ The exclusive focus on strategies of capture overlook lines of flight that arise from every territorializing gesture. As Deleuze and Guattari note,

No sooner do we note a simple opposition between the two kinds of spaces than we must indicate a much more complex difference by virtue of which the successive terms of the oppositions fail to coincide entirely. And no sooner have we done that than we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space.³²

The recursive mechanism that results from the encounter between nation-states and nomads results not in the total enclosure of the latter or in the evisceration of the former, but in a fractal politics. The fractal is not a dialectical formation that sediments identities into already established political and cultural communities. Rather, the inherently recursive structure of migrancy results in complex political formations that are

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1911200.stm>.

³¹ See, for example, Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the New Global System*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols, Gerald Prince, and Wendy Steiner, *Parallax: Re-Visions of Culture and Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

³² Deleuze and Guattari, 474.

themselves always already in the processes of being deterritorialized. Thus, the encounters between nation-states and migrants give rise to an infinity of “fuzzy aggregates.”³³ That is, while these encounters replicate and encourage nationalist identities, they also engender identities that transcend the narrow bounds of the nation-state. They produce creolist affirmations that conjure ever-mobile allegiances.

To write about migrancy’s fractal politics while avoiding a territorializing narrative, I approach the dissertation as a series of interconnecting themes and not as a centralized narrative. Through cultural products ranging from novels to films, I engage with spatial and temporal representations, notions of belonging, medicalization of difference, and the relationship between languages and nations as themes central to the migrant’s presence. As already noted, my interests exceed statist responses to migrancy. I am concerned with the manner in which discourses of migrancy exceed statist capture, producing novel forms of social and political arrangements. Thus, if migrant acts are not the products of stable identities, but are the infinite proliferation of identities and narratives that arise out of the fission of imperial identity formations, these are best understood not by speaking about the effects of

³³ Ibid., 487.

migrancy, but by adopting the migrant's unruly affect.

To signal the departure from a stable, binary discourse, Chapter 2 introduces Sycorax not as Shakespeare's maligned character, but as a concept-metaphor that offers a useful point of entry into the identity transformations that define late modern migrancy. I argue that contrary to the Caliban's dialectical preoccupation, Sycorax transcends the territorial by eschewing the politics of authenticity. Sycorax, embodied in the myth and history of la Malinche, is a migrant whose acts of translation and appropriation rewrite cultures and produce identities that are always already in flux.

The West responds to these movements through a myriad of strategies that work to territorialize the native. The first, which I explore in chapter 3, is a strategy that highlights the necessity of a universal civic education. The centrifugal forces of migrancy are disciplined through a move that seeks to dissipate its energy by creating dissimilar conceptions of cosmopolitanism. Reaching back to the colonial/imperial architectonics, it grants universal citizenship to the European, while inaugurating qualified forms of cosmopolitanism for the migrant Other. The migrant Other is categorized as a rooted cosmopolitan, a taxonomy that introduces the concept of race and culture through cosmopolitanism's back door. The migrant's movements are thus disciplined through a conception that denies

ontological resistance.

Coterminous with the calls for a universal civic education, as chapter 4 suggests, are increased practices of surveillance. This is most marked in the deployment of a medical discourse in the reformation of identity narratives. The migrant emerges in these narratives as the silent carrier of diseases that threaten to undo the West. In these narratives, the virus, from HIV to Ebola, becomes synonymous with the migrant. This equation is placed in the service of an apparatus of surveillance that attempts to recover territorial sovereignty through discourses about transborder movements. They seek to contain the migrants' deterritorializing effect through the narrative of "imagined immunities."

While these efforts render transparent the epistemic upheaval occasioned by late modern migrancy, they prove ineffective at controlling them. Chapter 5 and 6 suggests ways in which the presence of the migrant not only disrupts but leads to the creation of new identity narratives and consequently to new politics and modes of being. Chapter 5 uses Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* to argue that the migrant's Sycoraxian disposition introduces new spatial and temporal conceptions that are anathema to modernist and colonial identity narratives. The chronotopes and openness of Ghosh's novel suggest a way of being-in-the-world that dwells not in stability, but in flux. Chapter

6 extends this argument through the works of Deleuze, Rancier, and Okri by arguing that the migrant makes it possible for a form of politics that dwells in the infinity of filiations. Appropriating the rhythmic repetitions of Okri's novels, I argue that the migrant's politics is not enunciated from a stable locus, but takes place in a continuous and movable chain of allegiances.

CHAPTER 2

"FORGET THE ALAMO!": AN EULOGY FOR CALIBAN

What a islan! What a people!
 Man an woman, old an young
 Jusa pack dem bag an baggage
 An tun history upside dung!³⁴

In his novel, *Ambiguous Adventure*, Cheikh Hamidou Kane frames the alienating colonial moment through the educational portrait of Samba Diallo. Successor to the Thierno, the spiritual leader of the Diallobes, Diallo is sent by his elders to France to "learn the secrets of the white man's power." In Paris, he studies philosophy, for he is convinced encoded therein lies the white men's "law, their language" the constitutive "texture of their genius."³⁵ His immersion in French language and philosophy awarded him with an irreconcilable conflict, for the deeper he delved into the white man's mysteries, the further he found himself from the "simple faith of his people." The movement away from his people, the fount of his wisdom traditions, came with no substitute source of meaning. The West "had made no real

³⁴ Louise Bennett, "Colonisation in Reverse," in Louise Bennett, *Jamaica Labrish* (Kingston, Jamaica: Sangster's Book Stores, 1966).

³⁵ Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventures*, trans. Katherine Woods, African Writers Series (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1962), 131.

provision for his participation.”³⁶ Diallo - the synecdoche of the Diallobes, of the Senegalese, of the African - finds no appeasing virtue in French philosophy and language. Rather, they seeded in him the desire to curse.

The colonial alienation evinced by Diallo finds its most compelling representations in Third World appropriations of *The Tempest*.³⁷ Inspired by the 1610 wreck of the Sea-Venture, *The Tempest* captures a moment of transition in Europe’s colonial venture. It records the Mediterranean kingdoms and city-states’ declining imperial influence and the global ascent of the Atlantic maritime states of Northern Europe.³⁸ Shakespeare realizes in *The Tempest* the Atlantic’s archetypal encounter between the colonizer and the colonized. While the text scripts the encounter through a rigid civilizational hierarchy, the text’s dialectics, a contest between Prospero and Caliban, is the most prominent concept-metaphor in Third World anti-colonial narratives. Third World writers - from Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and George Lamming to Roberto Fernández Retamar - have found in Caliban an anti-colonial hero. In their works, Caliban becomes Toussaint Louverture and Gungunhana, the slave who enters

³⁶ Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 98.

³⁷William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1994). For a critical rewriting of *The Tempest*, see Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* (New York: UBU Repertory Theater, 1997).

the historical stage not as Shakespeare's deformed monster, but as the revolutionary who shouts, "Uhuru!"³⁹

Third World appropriations of *The Tempest* are dynamic records of anti-colonial and post-colonial socio-political scapes. They are important texts in an analysis of the political and philosophical implications of Caliban as a concept-metaphor. To preempt the discussion, Third World "Calibanic" interventions naturalize Prospero and Caliban's dialectical interface. They trap *The Tempest's* protagonists in a closed agonistic circuit. Prospero and Caliban are denied freedom: they exist only for each other. Consequently, for Caliban especially, colonial history comes to assume an overarching meaning. While a complex political history precedes Prospero's arrival in the Island, Caliban is a political and historical tabula rasa. Caliban enters the world's historical stage not as an agent, but as a foil in Prospero's grand narrative. This dialectical structure of intelligibility has purchase, however, only insofar as it derives its discursive force from territorially fixed narratives. The symbolic power of Prospero and Caliban's encounter obtains from a social anthropology that transforms physical spaces into places.⁴⁰ Hence, Caliban is, in the words of George Lamming, "at

³⁸ Linebaugh and Rediker, 14-15.

³⁹ Césaire, *A Tempest*, 11.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the social construction of place, see Mike

once a landscape and a human situation.”⁴¹ The encounter thus achieves meaning not as event but as history: it stages the representative confrontation between the colonizer and the “native.”

Caliban is all but silent in contemporary postcolonial narratives. He is no longer the actor whose voice reverberates in social realist text aimed at speaking back to the Center. In late-modernity's accelerated exchanges and encounters, Caliban's voice, the product of a territorializing claim, is eclipsed by a deterritorialized and deterritorializing force. This chapter maintains that Caliban's silence marks a profound change in the encounter between the West and the Rest. It argues that late-modern migrancy, both spatial and imaginary, has unchained the native from her historical service. The late-modern native is not a territorially bound and peripheral presence, who articulates her identity through an oppositional discourse. Rather, she is an unruly, deterritorializing agent whose presence ruptures the isomorphism between nations and identity, allowing for a being-in-the-world that exceeds the narrow bounds of the colonial.

Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism, and Identity*, ed. Mike Featherstone, *Theory, Culture and Society* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁴¹ George Lamming, *The Pleasure of Exile* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 118.

As Cheikh Hamidou Kane illustrates of Samba Diallo, Caliban's alienation and rage are expressed as a product of and through a complex linguistic entanglement. However, the Calibanic curse, the linguistic tension at the core of the colonial dialectics, participates in a "monotopic hermeneutics" that draws national borders around languages, literatures, and cultures.⁴² Caliban's rejection of Prospero and his nationalist claims fosters an imperial allocution wherein the Other is anchored to geographic spaces as the loci of stable cultural and linguistic practices. Against this fixing discourse, I introduce Sycorax as a concept-metaphor that disrupts monotopic hermeneutics. Sycorax's presence in absence from *The Tempest* instantiates a languaging practice that relates to languages, literatures, and cultures not as objects around which to enact a discourse of authenticity, but rather, as Walter Mignolo suggests, as continuously negotiated practices. This Sycoraxian stance, as illustrated by Mexican migrants in the United States, radically alters our relationship to the nation as a locus of identity formation, introducing new creole identity practices and politics.

⁴² Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*, ed. Sherry B. Ortner, Nicholas B. Dirks, and Geoff Eley, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 228.

My return to *The Tempest* is not meant to resuscitate a trope that has limited paradigmatic function in contemporary debates. Neither is it to hold *The Tempest* as the principal source of concept-metaphors with which to conceptualize the tensions implicit in the dialogues between the West and its Other. Rather, my sojourn into the archives of Caliban's figurative function serves as a point of entry into a discussion about the changes in postcolonial nationalist projects. Thus, my interest lies less with the productive force of Caliban as metaphor, and more with what Caliban's absence reveals about the changing conceptions of the national and the possibilities for the creation of transformative identities in the postcolonial era.

*Season of Anomy*⁴³

The centrality of language to the instantiation of national co-presence is now axiomatic in nation-state scholarship. Writers from Ernest Renan to Benedict Anderson have held the emergence of national languages as one of the principal events in the formation of national identity. This connection has served Caliban well, for he derives his role as the exemplary figure of the dispossessed from his mastery of Prospero's language. His

⁴³ This section's heading comes from Wole Soyinka, *Season of Anomy* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Fountain Publication, 1994).

linguistic ability places him at the discursive frontline between empires and their subjects. His position, however, transcends sheer linguistic mastery. For, though he speaks the master's language, he is ambivalent about its benefits. He comments,

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!⁴⁴

Caliban uses Prospero's language to re-sound an antecedent self, to speak back to Prospero. It is this negative use of language - his refusal to conform to Prospero's colonialist discourse - that endears him to anti-colonial thinkers.

Caliban's defiance made him a Fanonian anti-colonial subject, a "new species" eager to reclaim his "manhood" in the smithy of nationalist struggles.⁴⁵ By willfully vomiting the oppressor's culture, he rejects decolonization as the non-violent transition of power.⁴⁶ Aimé Césaire captures this moment of negation in *A Tempest* when Caliban utters, "First of all, I'd get rid of you! I'd spit you out, all of your works and pomps! Your "white" magic! . . . You know very well that I am not interested

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1.2.437-439.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the role of masculinity in Fanon's writing, see Françoise Vergès, "Creole Skin, Black Mask: Fanon and Disavowal," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997). See also Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constanca Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 36-47.

in peace. I'm interested in being free! Free, you hear?"⁴⁷

Caliban's revolutionary allocution is forged out of a problematic linkage between linguistic and material dispossession. He declares:

This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother / Which
 thou tak'st from me. When thou cam'st first / Thou
 strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst / give me
 / Water with berries in't, and teach me how / To
 name the bigger light and how the less, / That
 burn by day and by night. And then I love thee, /
 And showed thee all the qualities o' th' isle, /
 The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and /
 fertile / Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
 / Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you, /
 For I am all the subjects that you have, / Which
 first was mine own king; and here you sty me / In
 this hard rock, whiles you do keep me from / The
 rest o' th' island.⁴⁸

Caliban's hermeneutics reclaims Sycorax as the Island's original inhabitant and rightful owner. He expresses his revolt as a masculine struggle to possess the "motherland" both as concept and entity. His utterance establishes the Mother as the source of all authentic linguistic and cultural identity in Third World nationalist movements.

Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* echoes Caliban's evocation of Sycorax as the authorizing complex mother tongue/motherland. Kane stresses that the colonial assault was not by cannon alone. He notes,

⁴⁷ Césaire, *A Tempest*, 63.

The cannon compels the body, the school bewitches the soul. Where the cannon has made a pit of ashes and of death, in the sticky mold of which men would not have rebounded from the ruins, the new school establishes peace.⁴⁹

Kane underscores here what Fanon describes as the “perverse logic” of colonialism - the distortion and destruction of the oppressed’s history - by mapping Diallo’s alienation through a progressive movement away from the epics of the Diallobe and towards the linguistic and cultural adventures of “nos ancêtres les Gaulois.” This (mis)education, Kane suggests, was charged with convincing the oppressed of the necessity of the colonizer’s presence. It sought to drive “into the natives’ heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.”⁵⁰ This erasure of historical depth becomes codified into a psychological complex that manifests not only in the colonized’s purported infantile desire for protection, but in his need for a mother-object.⁵¹

In a mythopoetic mode, anti-colonial movements responded to the denial of history - to the absence of the authorizing Mother - by invoking a historical past that rivals the West’s in

⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1.2.395-411.

⁴⁹ Kane, 49.

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 211.

⁵¹ For an elaboration of the psychodynamics of the dependency complex, See Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990).

magnificence and detail. They did so by crafting an authentic self through an objectified Sycorax, a being as ancient as those in Prospero's books. Wole Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World* is a convincing illustration of this desire. The reflections that inform this collection of essays have their origin in the early 1970s during Soyinka's yearlong appointment at Churchill College, Cambridge. During his stay, he was invited to deliver a series of lectures on literature and society by the Department of Social Anthropology. As a writer, Soyinka found the lectures' disciplinary locus disconcerting, for they confirmed the English Department's negation of "any mythical beast as 'African Literature'."⁵² Relegated to the overly familiar surroundings of Cultural Anthropology, Soyinka turns homeward and questions the manner in which a segment of the African intelligentsia understood their relationship to the West.

Writing in 1976, Soyinka argues that the modes of self-apprehension adopted by too many African intellectuals suffer from one of two equally troubling problems. First, they are victims of a colonial bind that makes it impossible for Africans to understand themselves outside a Western structure of referentiality. Second, they negate the self by adopting a "universal humanoid abstraction." To counter these inauthentic

⁵² Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*

modes of being, Soyinka adopts a system of self-understanding that draws from "within the culture itself."⁵³ Coming from Nigeria, he finds the source of his positive self-apprehension in Yoruba mythology. Yoruba cosmology provides him with a counter-structure that resists both the self-negation of having the West as a referent and the self-loss of an immersion in universal humanism.

Soyinka's "return to the source" is both a route out of the epistemic quicksand of an unmitigated adoption of Western philosophical traditions and a search for an anti-imperialist arsenal. As he acknowledges, his pursuit is integral to a combative disposition. He asserts:

...I possess neither wish nor temperament to abandon the continuing, combative imperatives of the dialectics of human history.⁵⁴

Such a dialectical historical construct permits him a clear demarcation between the West and the Rest. It is a roadmap to the wellspring of Yoruba myths where he drinks from the mythopoetic wells to steady himself against the "Greco-Latin" assault.

Soyinka unpacks the dialectics that informs his self-understanding in *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness*.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), vii.

⁵³ Ibid., viii.

⁵⁴ Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*

In an essay, "L.S. Senghor and Negritude: *J'accuse, mais, je pardonne*," he addresses the questions of equality and cultural resistance elicited by the Negritude movement as an aesthetic antidote to Prospero's ideology. The essay begins with a description of UNESCO's 1996 celebration of Senghor's ninetieth birthday. As a consideration for the Poet's age and ill health, the organizers arranged for him to deliver his presentation from his home through a live video feed. Soyinka describes the setting of Senghor's presentation thus:

It was not a garden filled with the tamarind trees of Joal, the perfumes it gave off would clearly not be 'of the bush, hives of russet bees that dominate the crickets'; it was simply the clipped grounds and luxuriant flowers of his obviously French country home, his French wife by his side, in an ambiance that was clearly alien to the majority of — shall we simply say? — the Senegalese who, in far off West Africa, were similarly gathered to do him honor. That ambiance was one that had shaped his sensibilities both as thinker and poet, despite his undeniable fidelity to the absent sources from whose darker, ancestral draughts he also, as thinker and poet, drank.⁵⁵

What is striking about Soyinka's reading of the presentation is the unreflexive conflation of the speech's *mise en scène* with Senghor's personal and intellectual biography. The speech's inauthentic setting, lacking the requisite tamarind trees and bush fragrances, punctuated by the presence of the dutiful French

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

wife, screams, to Soyinka's ears, of an alienated soul. The scene's physical setting, Soyinka maintains, participates in a muting of difference. They are the physical expression of an interior, psychic landscape. "As if those immediate outward images with which we were confronted were not, however, sufficient to narrate the full inner biography of this remarkable man," Senghor, Soyinka maintains, willfully glosses over France's colonial history,⁵⁶ subsuming the history of the Département d'Outre-Mer under an European/French humanism that washes away all colonial sins. What grates at Soyinka is not Negritude's "defunct cosmology" - its mythopoesis - but its catholic gesture of forgiveness, a gesture that "generates both intellectual and visceral unease in what can only be interpreted as an endorsement of the aggressor's claims of superiority."⁵⁷

Contrary to Senghor, Soyinka, ever vigilant against the West's persistence as history's "silent referent," seeks to break out of Negritude's deceptive universal humanism.⁵⁸ His corrective - the negation of the West as the measure of genuine, positive self-apprehension - is not, however, without problems. The overly affirmative character of his combative stance traps

⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?," *Representation*, no. 37 (1992): 2.

him in Europe's totalizing philosophy of history. His articulations, though fully nuanced, gravitate around the West as the negation that sets in motion his enunciations. Soyinka's Calibanic posture is thus reactive. His utterances achieve full intelligibility only within the colonial matrix that sustains their condition of possibility. Aimé Césaire captures this dynamic when, commenting on *The Tempest*, he notes:

Caliban and he (Prospero) make an inseparable couple. Just as blacks and whites cannot separate themselves from each other in America, Prospero cannot separate himself from Caliban, and that is the story. It is the indissoluble character of the union which makes the drama.⁵⁹

Soyinka's reversion, his return to the source, is thus not a solution. His mythopoesis engages in a mimetic act that militates against Prospero's systemic narrative by embracing Sycorax as the mother-object, the Yoruba mythic presence. This discursive embrace is, however, infelicitous for it binds him to the very monotopic hermeneutics he seeks to escape.

In his mythopoetic journey, Soyinka aspires to an ontology beyond the colonial experiential horizon: he seeks to capture the "threnodic essence" of being.⁶⁰ In his representations, "The

⁵⁹ Thomas A. Hale, *Écrits D'aimé Césaire, Bibliographie Commentée* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montreal, 1978), 456.

⁶⁰ Soyinka's mythopoetic drive extends beyond the ontological. He seeks to enact not only a Yoruba centered ethical play, but to argue that Yoruba morality has an inherently universal signature. The instinct is not merely to counter the West's moral universal, but to

Colonial Factor," he writes in the author's note to *Death and the King's Horseman*, "is an incident, a catalytic incident merely."⁶¹ His mythopoesis, however, evinces, against his stated intent, a total entanglement in the colonial historical project. His use of myth - his request, for example, that *Death and the King's Horseman* be read as a metaphysical text - betrays a reactive desire for history. For while he aims to construct a historical narrative that derives from "the universe of the Yoruba mind," his avowal of the primacy of the Yoruba cosmology bespeaks a preoccupation with an "absolute state of being." His project suffers from an anxiety with origins that is symptomatic of the Other's perceived lack of history. To extend Glissant's reading of the Caribbean's non-history, the colonized enters History - a hegemonic historical frame - through a series of negations and disruptions.⁶² This denial of the Other's global consciousness of self results in a historical neurosis that manifests in compensatory narratives. Paradoxically, myth, the pre-modern arena where collective consciousness accrues "gradually and continuously like sediment," surfaces as the vehicle through

expand its boundaries by introducing a different ethical construct. For a discussion of the "ethical universal" in Soyinka's works, see Patrick Colm Hogan, "Particular Myths, Universal Ethics: Wole Soyinka's the *Swamp Dwellers* in the New Nigeria," *Modern Drama* 41, no. 4 (1998).

⁶¹ Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 6.

⁶² Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, ed. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 62.

which the colonial Other formulates a modern self. Soyinka's use of Yoruba cosmology thus returns myth to its pre-historic utility: his mythopoesis creates a non-European secular cosmology that gives historical meaning to the Nigerian/African.

Similarly, Soyinka uses threnody to "elicit that profound communal catharsis which is one of the acknowledged ends of tragic action."⁶³ For, although he eschews the "facile tag of 'clash of cultures',"⁶⁴ his use of threnody, especially in his plays, erects a national identity substratum by voicing wrongs around which the protean nation coalesces.⁶⁵ In this respect, Soyinka's appeal to a metaphysical hermeneutics, the idea that "*Death and the King's Horseman* can be realized only through an evocation of music from the abyss of transition," indexes not simply the want for agency in Europe's abstract humanism, but also the desire for a nationalist history.

In Soyinka's mythopoesis, transition - the "numinous passage" linking the living, the dead, and the unborn - has a central role. It is the thread that links his works. Moreover,

⁶³ Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 55.

⁶⁴ Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, 5.

⁶⁵ Witness, for example, the United States' use of the events of September 11th to simultaneously reach back to its history and forward to its future to rewrite itself as the victim and lone arm struggling against "evil." Its history becomes an epic marked by tragedies ranging from Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor to the death of 18 Special Forces soldiers in Mogadishu, Somalia. Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* brilliantly illustrates this effort. For a commentary on the film's rewriting of history, see George Monbiot, "Both Saviour and Victim,"

evoking a world that defies linear temporalities, he uses transition as a dramatic “medium of totality” that distinguishes African drama from the West’s dramatic “compartmentalizing habit of thought.” However, while he bases his conception of transition on the numinous, the realist staging of his works gesture to a parallel, modernist conception of transition. *Death and the King’s Horseman* illustrates this convergence. The play, based on a 1946 incident, stages the encounter between Yoruba and British customs. After the death of his ruler, Elesin, the king’s chief horseman, bound by custom and honor, prepares for suicide. Hearing of Elesin’s intention to follow his king to the afterlife, the district officer intervenes and jails him. While at first Elesin understands his plight as an expression of divine will, he has a dramatic change of heart when his son commits suicide to preserve the family’s honor. Although Soyinka uses Elesin’s tragedy in a cosmological gesture, evincing an “understanding of irreducible truths,” the play’s realist setting instates a secular transition, the transition from Yoruba laws and customs to those of the British. Thus, *Death and the King’s Horseman* captures a moment in the birth of the Nigerian Nation.⁶⁶

Guardian Weekly, February 7-13 2002.

⁶⁶ Wole Soyinka has identified *Death and the King’s Horseman* as the second work in a “trilogy of transition.” The two other plays are *The Road* and *Requiem for a Futurologist*. For a discussion of the secular character of Soyinka’s transition plays, see Wole Ogundele,

The district officer's intervention in the Yoruba ritual bespeaks of a temporal understanding of cultural differences that places the non-West in a perennial antecedent position. In this framework, the West's purported historical knowledge, as Dipesh Chakrabarty affirms, becomes synonymous with a temporal divide that reduces the Other to a state of lack/absence. This, as I have discussed above, explains Soyinka's reversion to Yoruba mythology. More importantly, however, it suggests that the resuscitation of denigrated cosmologies is not sufficient, a moment Soyinka implicitly acknowledges in his discussion of space in African drama. He contends that symbolic spatiality is as important to African drama as cosmological temporalities. That is, unlike its Western complement, African drama does not depend on formalized spaces: the theater and the stage. Because it embraces the cosmological, thus exceeding "period dialectics," it uses a shared grammar of rituals to affirm a communal understanding of performances and spaces.⁶⁷ It uses sounds, smells, and utterances to enact a "communal compact whose choric essence supplies the collective energy for the challenger of chthonic realms."⁶⁸ While African dramatic performances are

"'Death and the King's Horseman': A Poet's Quarrel with His Culture," *Research in African Literature* 25, no. 1 (1994).

⁶⁷ For a discussion of spatiality in Africa drama, see Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 37-60.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

enacted from within a fluid conception of space, their intelligibility is dependant on a pre-negotiated paradigmatic structure. The need to extend this structure of intelligibility beyond the Yoruba community haunts Soyinka's mythopoesis. In order to insinuate the Yoruba presence into History, he participates in a Western defined spatio-temporal discourse, an involvement witnessed by the convergence of the cosmological and realist in *Death and the King's Horseman*. For while the play aspires to transcend history, it enunciates its cosmology from within a modernist spatio-temporal locus: the nation state. The stage for Elesin's tragedy is the inchoate Nigerian nation. Elesin's belief that the gods willed the magistrate's intervention, and that no further action was therefore required of him, reveals itself as a tear in the fabric of Yoruba cosmology. It is this tear that the son's propitiatory gesture attempts to repair. However, *Death and the King's Horseman* sutures the numinous passages - the links between the ancestors, the king, Elesin, and the son - through a modernist conception of transition. The play's "threnodic essence" stems not solely from the caprices of the gods, but from the futility of the colonized, modernist nostalgia for a pre-contact past.

Modernist transition narratives, the lamentation for lost traditions, find expression in concepts such as development, modernization, and capitalism. These concepts, however, are

“firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state at every turn.”⁶⁹ Hence, Soyinka’s transition narrative places him squarely in the company of Third World nationalist writers. This group was keenly aware of the convergence of history and narrative: the importance of Prospero’s books was not lost on Caliban. They understood, as Glissant suggests, that men are not of this world but find their place in the world through narration. Thus, in seeking to counter Western historical transcendental legitimacy, anti-colonial nationalists attempted to fracture History through the nation.⁷⁰ As Ashis Nandy writes of India, “Most nationalist leaders in India, as in other such societies, were then convinced that the absence of a proper nation-state and proper nationalist sentiments were major lacunae in Indian society and indices of its backwardness.”⁷¹ This Calibanic stance, the drive to curse the

⁶⁹ Chakrabarty: 19.

⁷⁰ Nation-states were by no means the sole vector through which anti-colonial thinkers sought to express their collective identity. Race and class, though less successful, were important platforms in the anti-colonial struggle. Two expressions of these are the pan-African and the non-Aligned movements. Both projects, to differing degrees, eschewed the mythopoetic for a realist political engagement. For the importance of race in the pan-African movement, see Alexander Crummell’s “’Africa and Her People’: Lecture Notes,” in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, ed., *Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898/Alexander Crummell* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992). For a general history of the movement, see Manning Marable, *African and Caribbean Politics: From Kwame Nkrumah to Maurice Bishop* (London: Verso, 1987).

⁷¹ Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994),

West in a language it understands, forces Third World thinkers, as Soyinka's case illustrates, to assert their vision within a narrow territorial frame. They are moved by their combative posture to embrace their own territorial marginalization. As Partha Chatterjee notes:

There is, consequently, an inherent contradictoriness in nationalist thinking, because it reasons within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponds to the very structure of power nationalist thought seeks to repudiate.⁷²

This epistemic boomerang weakens Caliban's position and renders him poorly qualified as a purveyor of the post-national. For in his cursing, Caliban is no closer to finding an outside to Europe's colonial structure than Senghor in his open embrace of Europe's humanism. Soyinka's rejection of the Senghorian kiss of absolution is thus far from liberating. The linguistic and epistemic structure of his mythopoesis confines him to the same dialectical universe as Senghor. They are limited to embracing or cursing Prospero.

ix.

⁷² Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 38.

Speaking in Tongues

Against Caliban's negative epistemology - the conversion of the past into a mythic mother-object that authorizes an anti-colonial self - we find Sycorax's furtive presence. In spite of Shakespeare's rejection and the anti-colonial reductive appropriation of her image, Sycorax survives as an autonomous and transformative presence. Her being is not governed by the "denial of coevalness" that haunts subaltern historiography.⁷³ Unlike the subaltern, she is not a "subject-agent" to be recovered from the margins of colonial, modernist historiography. For while physically absent from *The Tempest* and its anticolonial derivatives, she is present through the unique character of her name, a quality that exceeds physicality. As Katherine Callen King writes, if we accept the Latin meaning of Prospero's name, "make happy or successful," the root of Sycorax's name (es k\rakas), "Go to Hell!," establishes "a perfect symmetry between the names of the 'good' and 'bad' families on the Island."⁷⁴ *The Tempest's* symmetric taxonomy suggests an entanglement that defies the subaltern's "pure externality." More importantly, Sycorax's

⁷³ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 25. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ Katherine Callen King, "Go to Hell, Sycorax," *English Language Notes* 37, no. 4 (1990): 2.

name lends a signifyin(g) quality to the play.⁷⁵ Her name, the phrase "Go to Hell!," is a performative utterance whose illocutionary force exceeds the fixity of proper names. She exceeds the role of a foil in Prospero's civilizational narrative. Hers is an entropic presence visible in the gravitational distortions she causes on those who orbit around her. Sycorax's being is quintessentially improvisational: we know of her presence, but, unlike Caliban's, cannot capture it in time and space. She is the embodiment of motion and dispersal, "an otherness that resists containment."⁷⁶

Sycorax's dispersive quality forces us, in the words of George Lamming, to "christen language afresh."⁷⁷ Her unbridled movements and juxtapositions introduce new critical vectors of approach to changes in postcolonial political, cultural, and economic terrains. Unlike Caliban, she does not suffer from the effects of denied entry into modernity. Her experiential horizon is not limited to the colonial and thus does not issue from the dialectics that haunts Caliban. Rather, she enacts a being in the world from within a temporality that acknowledges that "the postcolony encloses multiple durées made up of discontinuities,

⁷⁵ See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁷⁶ Gyan Prakash, "The Impossibility of Subaltern History," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 2 (2000): 288.

reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another.”⁷⁸ Hence, a Sycoraxian engagement with postcoloniality compels a critical reassessment of such notions as “writing back.” Commenting on the stimulus animating Third World literatures, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin contend that postcolonial literatures “emerged out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center.”⁷⁹ The authors’ assertions are exemplary of the reductive exegeses that uncritically maintain the centrality of the colonial experience. They transform the Other into a Caliban who is forever confined to the colonial imaginary. Sycorax’s resistance of spatial and temporal fixity problematizes this conception. Her errantry dispenses with the need to engage with the center, for she does not acknowledge the centrality of colonialism.⁸⁰ Rather, her poetics of relation opens a symbolic universe in which the colonial experience is only one in a long

⁷⁷ Lamming, 119.

⁷⁸ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, ed. Lynn Hunt, trans. Steven Rendall, *Studies on the History of Society and Culture*, vol. 41 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14.

⁷⁹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

⁸⁰ For a discussion of errantry and nomadism, see Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 11-22.

history of cultural encounters.

The Sycoraxian dispensation with the centrality of the colonial experience is most salient in Yambo Ouologuem's novel, *Bound to Violence*.⁸¹ In the decades since its publication, it has been a lightning rod for controversies, not least for its "persistent massaging" of texts ranging from Graham Green's *It's a Battlefield* to André Schwartz-Bart's *Le Dernier des justes*.⁸² Amidst accusations of self-hate for his "contempt for the victims" of colonialism and of blasphemy for his complete lack of deference to Islam and Christianity, critics have celebrated Ouologuem's "studied repudiation of historic blinkers."⁸³ Against the anti-colonial realist's search for an authentic historical self, Ouologuem solemnizes neither representational truths nor historical authenticity. *Bound to Violence* seeks neither identity nor refuge in a mythic pre-contact past. Ouologuem expands the canvas of African cultural encounters to accommodate

⁸¹Yambo Ouologuem, *Bound to Violence*, ed. Chinua Achebe, trans. Ralph Manheim (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, 1968).

⁸² Critics who accuse Ouologuem of plagiarism fail to appreciate the gesture behind his literary appropriations. Much as with his conception of history, his borrowings suggest a purposeful disruption of the "author-function." His griotic style questions, as Soyinka avers, "the principle of the ownership of the written word." In the novel, as in history, all is simulacrum. For a parallel philosophical exposition, see Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" in Donald P. Bouchard, ed., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁸³ Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 100. See also Christopher L. Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*

a world beyond the European, but no less bloody. The narrator frames his world thus:

. . . To recount the bloody adventures of the niggertrash – shame to the worthless paupers! – there would be no need to go back beyond the present century; but the true history of the Blacks begins much earlier, with the Saifs, in the year 1202 of our era, in the African Empire of Nakem south Fezzan, long after the conquest of Okba ben Nafi al-Fitri.⁸⁴

The narrator's account is paradoxical. While it denies the primacy of colonial history, it affirms the existence of a "true history of the Blacks." Ouologuem, however, deftly subverts this true history. First, asserting that the history of the Blacks began in 1202, he destabilizes it by gesturing to an earlier history of conquest. Second, by withholding a national and ethnic identity, using the appellation "the Blacks," the narrator emphasizes not the purported true history, but a history made salient by the violence of encounter. The subjects of his story were not always "Blacks," but became so in contact with a racial Other. By assuming a relational posture, Ouologuem disrupts Europe's typological time, refusing to place European colonialism at the beginning of Nakem's history. Similarly, he objects to "empty folklore."⁸⁵ Put differently, he rejects the simple

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

⁸⁴Ouologuem, 3.

⁸⁵Ibid.

substitution of one foundational narrative for another. Moreover, his rejection of colonial history is not merely a critique of the failure, intentional or otherwise, of historical practices. Rather, he fundamentally negates history's sovereign and originary subject.⁸⁶ Ouologuem rejects the conception of an originary identity that undergirds both European and anticolonial nationalist histories. He thus escapes Prospero and Caliban's dialectics by affirming a creole identity.

The Sycoraxian force that animates Ouologuem's post-nativist history obligates a critical posture to the master's language(s). Over the years, as a prescriptive gesture against the extra-linguistic effects of speaking and writing in colonial languages, writers from the Third World have advocated a return to the "mother tongue." Ngugi wa Thiong'o is perhaps the most vocal among this group of rejectionists. Ngugi began writing while a student at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda, publishing his first novel, *Weep Not, Child*, in 1964. In 1977, with the publication of *Petals of Blood*, he bid "farewell to the English language" and began writing his plays, novels, and short stories in Kikuyu. He continued, however, to write expository prose in English until 1981 when he published his

⁸⁶ See Clyde R. Taylor, *The Mask of Art: Breaking the Aesthetic Contract - Film and Literature* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998).

monograph *Decolonizing the Mind*. With this uncompromising text, he severed his residual ties to English as a vehicle for his writing, declaring: "from now on it is Kikuyu and Kiswahili all the way."⁸⁷

Ngugi's return to "the language of real life" is, he affirms, anti-Calibanic. In a move that echoes Amilcar Cabral's assertions about the cultural imperative of an authentic revolution, Ngugi argues that a people is best prepared to meet its historical destiny when it understands itself from within its socio-linguistic reality.⁸⁸ Hence, from Ngugi's position, writers such as Chinua Achebe and Ezekiel Mphahlele who attempt to make metropolitan language(s) carry the material and cultural experiences of their societies perform "a remarkable case of literary surgery and transplant."⁸⁹ They come to "Prospero's linguistic high table with an offering, a linguistic bottle of wine so to speak."⁹⁰ These linguistic Calibans receive little in exchange for their offerings. Their works, Ngugi contends, are alienating and alienated, for they are out of sync with the people's linguistic and material existence. Ngugi's project is, therefore, to halt this process by presenting the Third World

⁸⁷Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (London Portsmouth, N.H.: J. Currey Heinemann, 1986), xiv.

⁸⁸ See Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches by Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

⁸⁹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center: The Struggle for Cultural*

writer with an alternative to the "taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues."⁹¹ This proscription is, however, problematic, for his linguistic rooting is no more in sync with the people's reality. If, as he asserts, the mother tongue is the canvas on which communities produce authentic historical images of themselves, this cultural process is inherently dynamic. That is, a community's linguistic palette, its field of signification, is neither transhistoric nor stable: they are essentially transmutable and fluid. Hence, inasmuch as the colonial and neocolonial linguistic and material experiences are ineluctable domains of the people's collective consciousness, Ngugi's position scotomizes the very processes he seeks to accentuate.

The linguistic reversion he advocates is driven by a Calibanic desire for roots. It is a continuation of the nationalist drive to recover the mother-object from the colonial rubble. This archeology is, however, limiting for it holds languages as immutable vectors in the colonial encounter. More importantly, in depicting linguistic encounters as isomorphic, the rejectionists rob the colonized of agency. In Ngugi's formulation the Other is merely an object freely molded by

Freedoms (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993), 20.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹Thiong'o, 8.

metropolitan languages. Ngugi fails to recognize the Other's appropriation and transmutation of metropolitan languages in everyday social commerce. This is a process most visible in the variability of creole languages. In its application, creole exhibits a Sycoraxian dispensation with authenticity. It is, as Glissant notes, a "new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry."⁹² Creole molds from the fragments of encounter a language and disposition that trace "a landscape that is not possessed," but dwells in approximations.⁹³ As Ariel Dorfman writes, creole delimits "the spaces between established linguistic systems, the myriad . . . zones of confluence where languages can mix and experiment and express the fluctuating frontiers of a mingled humanity."⁹⁴

The use of creole extends beyond the syntactic strategies of everyday commerce. It is elemental to a postcolonial civic entanglement.⁹⁵ Creole's paradigmatic instantiations are

⁹² Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 34.

⁹³ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, 85.

⁹⁴ Ariel Dorfman, "The Nomads of Language," *The American Scholar* 71, no. 1 (2002): 91.

⁹⁵ The Creole of which I write is not the statist creole of Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Rafaël Confiant, *Éloge De La Créolité: In Praise of Creoleness*, trans. M. B. Taleb-Khyar (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). It is not a creole that seeks codification into a literary tradition. For a critique of *L'éloge de la Créolité*, see Alexie Tcheuyap, "Creolist Mystifications: Oral

particularly evident in literary practices, of which Toni Morrison's novels and literary criticism are useful illustrations. Interpreters of Morrison's novels have noted her mastery of the vernacular, her use of the aural to affirm the African-American presence within the American literary tradition. However, in a canonizing move, they have been too eager to read her works as exercises in re-centering the black logos, an attribution Morrison contests. For while Morrison's novels participate in a space clearing gesture by sounding an Africanist voice, her writings dispel the logocentric impulse. This is exemplified in *Song of Solomon* by Milkman's search for a name.⁹⁶ Milkman, the novel's protagonist, embodies the existential angst of a man who lacks a proper name. The names given to him, Macon Dead III and Milkman - the first the result of his grandfather's ill fated christening by a drunken white soldier and the second the marker of a latent Oedipal complex - are signifiers of abjection. Hence, in the quest for a "name that was real," an allegory of the African-American struggle to "dis-cover the originary black logos," Milkman distances himself from the

Writing in the Works of Patrice Chamoiseau and Simone Schwartz-Bart," *Research in African Literature* 32, no. 4 (2001). See also Maryse Condé, "Order, Disorder, Freedom, and the West Indian Writer," *Yale French Studies* 0, no. 83 (1993).

⁹⁶ Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (New York: Signet Book, 1977).

"narcotic narcissism" of statist languages.⁹⁷ He hears the ephemeral sounds of his ancestral name not in the recitation of the plantation's bill of sales or in the planters' imaginary, but in the creolist language of his kinfolk in the backwoods of Virginia. It is in listening for the inaudible nuances, the hunter's non-verbal exchanges with the dogs during a raccoon hunt, that he finds the illusive and illusory trace of his ancestors, the pre-lexical inscription of an Africanist presence that lies "beyond the margins of the logo's field of power."⁹⁸

Milkman's pursuit a communal memory – which culminates in his learning about the sacred site from which his ancestor, Solomon, flew back to Africa – resists "prescriptive closure."⁹⁹ In a final act of communal embrace and of renunciation of all "the shit that weighs you down," Milkman rememorates Solomon's flight by jumping off of Solomon's Leap. Morrison, however, double voices Milkman's flight. As Richard Heyman has suggested, Milkman's flight signals both the re-centering of his communal memory, of a chain of signification that reaches back to Solomon,

⁹⁷ Timothy B. Powell, "Toni Morrison: The Struggle to Depict the Black Figure on the White Page," *Black American Literature Forum* 24, no. 4 (1990): 756. For the problematic search for a name, see Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993; reprint, Thirty-Fourth), 203.

⁹⁸ Powell: 757.

⁹⁹ Richard Heyman, "Universalization and Its Discontents: Morrison's *Song of Solomon* – a (W)Hol(E)Y Black Text," *African American Review* 29, no. 3 (1995): 381.

and a flight from the complex racial, cultural, and political entanglements of the present. In its simultaneous movement toward an ancestral identity and away from a textured present, Milkman's flight falls short of an unambiguous celebration of ancestral memory as sacred rites with the power to heal historical ruptures. What is more, the ancestral memory and identity towards which he flies is not an end, but a beginning. Solomon's flight to Africa does not re-center a black logos grounded on the communal trauma of slavery, but gestures to a self that resides elsewhere. Solomon's Leap is therefore not the moment of arrival, but a departure. His flight is a signpost pointing to other possibilities, other identities.

Pierre Nora's exploration of the tensions between history and memory provides an additional prism for tracing the symbolic arc of Solomon's Leap. Nora suggests that the modern acceleration of history displaces memory as lived gestures and habits of a community.¹⁰⁰ He contends that while history is a "dictatorial memory" that aspires to a meta-discourse, memory is "blind to all but the community it binds."¹⁰¹ Nora pushes the tension further by suggesting that the "eradication of memory by history" results in *lieux de mémoire* as compensatory objects and sites. *Lieux de*

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Norra, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Memoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*: 9.

mémoire, he notes, “originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally.”¹⁰² For Milkman, therefore, Solomon’s Leap is a *lieux de mémoire*, a site of memory. However, inasmuch as he understands the Leap as a sacred site where memory congeals in the suspension of time, the Leap’s function betrays his will-to-memory. For if memory, as Nora contends, is organic to a community, the creation of *lieux de mémoire* suggests that memory is no longer spontaneous, but is experienced as duty, as a quest for identity. It speaks of a being-not-at-one with the community. The discovery of Solomon’s Leap, therefore, far from re-centering the black logos, opens Milkman to the abyss of identity.

Morrison’s fidelity to a creole disposition is thus an avowal of affirmative difference. While, in tracing Milkman’s name, she speaks to the violence of the past and the injustices of the present, her trajectory does not end in a Calibanic embrace of an oppositional black self. Rather, Morrison uses the quest to link Milkman to complex and polyvocal histories and memories. The America of Morrison’s text is thus haunted.

¹⁰² Ibid.: 12.

Milkman's familial name, Macon Dead, a homophone of "make 'm dead," is a haunting and disfiguring scar left by racist oppression. The haunting is, however, not isomorphic. White America, Morrison argues in *Playing in the Dark*, is similarly marked by the Africanist presence at its core. Morrison notes: "It was this Africanism, deployed as rawness and savagery, that provided the staging ground and arena for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity."¹⁰³ She is thus not moved by a need to counter America's race narrative with a reductive, nationalist affirmation. Her use of the vernacular is a conjuring act that disrupts Prospero's official language. She writes:

Official language smitheryed to sanction ignorance and preserve privilege is a suit of armor polished to shocking glitter, a husk from which the knight departed long ago. Yet there it is: dumb, predatory, sentimental. Exciting reverence in schoolchildren, providing shelter for despots, summoning false memories of stability, harmony among the public.¹⁰⁴

In her negation of official languages, she does not seek "escape but entanglement."¹⁰⁵ It is a turning away from the statist instinct that derives from the Calibanic drive to curse.

¹⁰³ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 44.

¹⁰⁴ Toni Morrison, *Nobel Lecture*(1993, accessed March 8 2002); available from www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html.

¹⁰⁵ Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary*

Morrison's alchemic shift away from Official language to creole as a "living thing over which one has control, but mostly as agency" enacts a Sycoraxian transfer.¹⁰⁶ It is a conjuring that signals to a multiplicity of speaking subjects who escape the narrow limits of the statist order. It refuses to embrace the nation at the expense of class, gender, sex, or race, moving us to a coincident engagement with all categories and languages as necessarily fluid and productive loci from which to enact a being-in-the-world.

Cutting off the Snake's Tongue

As Morrison suggests, in disrupting statist languages, a Sycoraxian creolist enactment also undermines the roots of communal and national histories. It sets identity afloat in an open matrix that resists being placed in the service of the nation and its patriarchal discourses. Such an enactment exhibit the quality of the serpent's tongue of Ruth Behar's *Translated Women*.¹⁰⁷ Behar recounts the explanation given by Esperanza, an Indian woman from Mexquitic, for why a snake's tongue is to be cut after it is killed. She quotes:

Imagination, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Morrison, *Nobel Lecture*(accessed).

¹⁰⁷Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

They say you have to cut out the tongues of serpents, because they're in league with the Evil One. The body rots or dissolves into nothing but the spirit continues to fight. So they say if in this world you kill a serpent and don't cut its tongue, in the next world it will turn you in with the Evil One. And your soul, your spirit, will be defenseless. The serpent will say, 'In the other life, you killed me, you took advantage of me.' Serpents talk back to you in the afterlife if you killed any of them and didn't cut out their tongues.¹⁰⁸

Esperanza's story reaches back to Coatlicue, the serpent goddess of the Nahuatl, to construct a neomyth that is heavily inflected by the narrative of the Fall. It recodes Coatlicue by emphasizing the binary speech/betrayal, the mark of the originary duplicity that is the cause of Adam and Eve's descent into history. Allegorically, her "talking serpent" is "born again in an alien tongue."¹⁰⁹ Her story re-enacts the essential quality of translation Walter Benjamin establishes in "The Task of the Translator." Influenced by the tradition of Talmudic commentary, Benjamin contends that translation exceeds fidelity to the original.¹¹⁰ For insofar as a text's "essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information," it escapes the act of translation as pure communication.¹¹¹ Put differently,

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁰ For an insightful analysis of Talmudic commentary, see Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book: Reading the Talmud*, trans. Llewellyn Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹¹¹ Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 69.

translation "goes beyond the transferal of subject matter between cultural texts and practices."¹¹² The original and the translation do not, therefore, share in their relationship to the signifier as such, but are brought together by the intentionality of language. Hence, Esperanza's story is not a faithful retelling of the original. Rather, in her function as a translator/commentator, Esperanza affirms a Sycoraxian stance. She is Benjamin's translator, whose every act of translation is an act of creation, an afterlife of the original.

Thus in their polyrhythmic appropriations and transmutations, Sycoraxian enactments neither celebrate in Soyinka's mythopoesis nor in Ngugi's linguistic return to the source, but thrive in impure and ephemeral identities. Contrary to Caliban's mother-object, Sycorax neither authorizes narratives of authenticity, nor births nations in resistance to European colonialism. Her translations and movements are anathema to a Calibanic historical gesture, for her forked tongue betrays cosmogony as purity.

The historical and literary appropriations of Malintzin Tenepal, Cortés' translator and lover, illustrate this outlook. Malintzin is an abject figure in much of Mexico's postcolonial historiography. She is the "monstrous double" of la Virgen de

¹¹² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge,

Guadalupe-Tonantzi, the Virgin Mother and patron saint of Mexico. Apposed to la Virgen, Malintzin, Norma Alarcón writes, "may be compared to Eve, especially when she is viewed as the originator of the Mexican people's fall from grace and the procreator of a 'fallen' people."¹¹³ Her disavowal is an instantiation of the translation/creation concept. As Alarcón notes, Malintzin's fall from grace - her service as translator, la Lengua (the Tongue), to Cortés and his chroniclers - is an act of procreation. She thus emerges in the works of Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz as la Chingada, the violated and violating Mother who births a mestizo Mexico. Paz uses the verb *chingar* to signify the "Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived."¹¹⁴ Malintzin, as la Chingada, captures, for the male Mexican writer, the contradiction between being "hijo de la Chingada" and "hijo de puta." It highlights the difference between dishonorable birth, "being son of a woman who voluntarily surrenders herself," and violated birth, "being the fruit of a violation."¹¹⁵ Malintzin is, in this patriarchal treatment, a fecund and passive body from whose violated wombs issues "gestures, attitudes and

1994), 163.

¹¹³ Norma Alarcón, "Traductora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic Figure of Chicana Feminism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 279.

¹¹⁴ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude and Other Writings*, trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, and Rachel Phillips Belash (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 79.

tendencies in which it is now difficult to distinguish the Spanish from the Indian.”¹¹⁶

This act of mestizaje, however, produced a Chicano identity that exceeded both Mexican and American national imaginaries. Chicanos have differently reworked the historical and symbolic appropriations of Malintzin. This is especially resonant in the works of Chicana feminists. In their works, Malintzin is no longer la Chingada, a passive character in Cortés’ drive for power. She surfaces as a speaking-subject who wills a new people into being. Contrary to Fuentes’ and Paz’s narrow matrilineal conception, birthing as the establishment of a new order, the proliferation and uses of Malintzin’s name suggest, for the Chicana scholars, a fluid concept-metaphor that resists sedimentation into the authoring Mother of community as identity. Chicana thinkers, like Gloria Anzaldúa, are receptive to Malintzin’s perennial self-reinvention. For Anzaldúa, Malintzin’s mystery and power reside in her complex and changing succession of names. For while she is for some the Aztec Malintzin Tenepal, she is for others doña Marina, la Lengua, la Malinche, la Chingada, la Llorona, among others. Through this spiral of names echoes the desire to enact different subjectivities and to resist being the mother-object.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

Malintzin is thus neither purely the betrayer/destroyer nor the creator. To understand her complex character, Anzaldúa traces the etymology of Malintzin's names and symbolisms to Tonantzi and from thence to Coatlicue, the serpent goddess.¹¹⁷ Anzaldúa's movement is not motivated by the desire to reclaim a neglected goddess, but to recover the serpent of Esperanza's story. Her search leads her back to Coatl, the pre-Columbian symbol of the serpent. In Coatl, Anzaldúa finds not the betrayer and passive Eve, but the "serpent's mouth guarded by rows of dangerous teeth, a sort of vagina dentate."¹¹⁸ She adds,

They [pre-Columbian Americans] considered it [the snake's mouth] the most sacred place on earth, a place of refuge, the creative womb from which all things were born and to which all things returned. Snake people had holes, entrances to the body of the Earth Serpent; they followed the Serpent's way, identified with the Serpent deity, with the mouth, both the eater and eaten. The destiny of human kind is to be devoured by the Serpent.¹¹⁹

The vagina dentate of Anzaldúa's analysis, the parallelism she establishes between Malintzin and Coatl, sustains a Sycoraxian negation of the mother-object. Anzaldúa's trajectory, contrary to Soyinka's for example, evinces a relational poetics that is acutely aware of the cultural convergences and tensions that

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 27.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

animate her story. In Malintzin's names, she finds not the continuum of a statist history, but the dispersals and movements of migrancy.

Anzaldúa thus suggests that the Chicana, as a migrant, is the embodiment of la Malinche, the "translated woman" whose boundary crossing tongue transcends the limits of the nation. Her forked tongue is the mark of "wandering peoples who will not be contained by the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the mark of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontier of the modern nation."¹²⁰ La Malinche, as a literary and historical instantiation of Sycoraxian dispersal, foregrounds the essential distinction between Caliban's nationalist capture and the Sycorax's creolist movements. The Sycoraxian tongue unmask the monotopic illusion that links language and nation, and reveals the statist violence that preserves the delusion of being-at-one with the nation.

The Migrant as Sycorax

In the late-modern acceleration of movements and encounters, the migrant is the quintessential embodiment of the Sycoraxian disposition. Migrants, documented and undocumented alike, share in the differences that mark them as "resident

aliens”: a population apart. Notwithstanding their similarities, factors that render them vulnerable to statist violence, the two, however, differ in their relationship to states’ legal apparatus. The undocumented immigrant occupies a far more precarious position than that occupied by the “legal” immigrant. Undocumented immigrants’ cultural and linguistic differences are compounded by their relationship to the law. It is their Sycoraxian location at the limits of the sovereign’s direct control that makes them of great interest. For, to refract Néstor García Canclini’s notion of cultural hybridity, migrants’ multicultural and “multitemporal heterogeneity” open the nation to a Sycoraxian dispersal.¹²¹ They challenge the statist exercises in control and self-definition, exposing the modes and instruments used by the state to preserve the nation as a monotopic discourse.

One of the leading tenets of American discourses on illegal migration is the belief that undocumented migrants pose a threat to the nation’s social and cultural stability. Two veins of evidence, not entirely divorced from each other, are summoned to substantiate this argument. While the first rests on immigrant

¹²⁰ Bhabha, 164.

¹²¹ For a discussion of multitemporal heterogeneity in the formation of hybrid cultures, see Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López (Minneapolis: University

workers' purported impact on the economy, the second focuses, predictably, on their impact on the nation's cultural vitality.

The economic explanation is largely based on the idea that the influx of undocumented migrants has a deflationary effect on the labor market. Undocumented immigrants, the argument holds, pressed by dire economic needs and possessing little or no marketable skills, accept difficult and unsafe jobs in agricultural and manufacturing industries at lower wages than domestic laborers. Thus, unskilled domestic laborers who previously commanded higher wages for their efforts find themselves earning less and at risk of losing their jobs. Evidence does not, however, bear this out.¹²²

In the United States, for example, evidence against this economic argument comes from the very population held responsible for its effects: Mexican undocumented migrants. The importation of Mexican unskilled laborers began in the first decades of the 20th century as a response to rising popular sentiment against Eastern and Southern European immigrants.¹²³ Prior to the First World War, the mass of immigrants entering the United States

of Minnesota Press, 1995).

¹²² For a discussion of the role of migrants in domestic and foreign economic policies, see Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 31-53.

¹²³ See, for example, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-*

originated from Western Europe. By 1919, this had undergone a dramatic change. Between 1910 and 1919, the majority of immigrants passing through Ellis Island came not from Western Europe, but from Southern and Eastern Europe. These new immigrants stood in stark contrast to their earlier counterparts. For, unlike western European immigrants, the Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Polish, and Russian Jews did not share a common culture, language, or religion with mainstream America. These differences were often compounded by the new immigrants' physical distinctions from the settled population. As a response to the intersection of their cultural, linguistic, and physical differences and the emerging patterns of industrialization, the new immigrants inaugurated novel patterns of settlement, clustering in discrete urban ethnic enclaves. While these enclaves provided safe havens from which to transition into the mainstream, they also accentuated the tapestry of differences that constituted America, further widening the rift between them and the settled population.

By the early 1920s, Americans had grown increasingly less tolerant of the new immigrants. The rise in anti-immigrant sentiments was fueled, in no small measure, by the social and economic upheavals occasioned by industrialization. One of the

paradoxes of industrial expansion is that, contrary to its promises of bettering the lives of workers, it produced increasing poverty and disaffection. Faced with climbing unemployment and abysmal living conditions in urban centers, Americans began to look for something or someone whom they could hold responsible. They found a ready-made scapegoat in the new immigrants. They grew resentful of what they understood as the Eastern and Southern Europeans' uncivilized and uncivilizing behaviors. Popular sentiment of the time is captured in the 1920 song, "The Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks," from which I quote below.

There's the Argentines and the Portuguese and the
Armenians and the Greeks/They don't know the
language they don't know the law/But they vote in
the country of the free/And a funny thing/When we
start to sing "My Country 'tis of thee"/None of us
know the words but the Argentines and the
Portuguese and the Greeks

There's this little flat, where you hang your
hat/Has a mystery I'll explain/The janitor is
Irish, the hull boy is a coon, and the elevator
fellow is a Dane/But who is the gent/That collects
the rent at the end of each four weeks/Ah! That is
all done by the Argentines and the Portuguese and
the Greeks¹²⁴

The song leaves little unsaid in its blatant attribution of

¹²⁴Arthur M. Swanstrom and Carey Morgan, "The Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks," Jos. W. Stern and Co., New York, 1920, Jon Emory Bryant Papers, Duke University Rare Books, Manuscript, and Special Collection Library.

America's social ills to the new immigrant population. What is remarkable about these lyrics are their apparent contradictions and ambiguities. For while they accuse the Argentines, the Portuguese, the Greeks, and the Armenians of having a penchant for alcohol, they simultaneously decry their avarice; while they charge them of voting without knowledge of the English language and law, they concede to the immigrants' acquaintance with aspects of American patriotic lore with which most nationals have but a passing familiarity. The contradictory nature of these charges renders transparent their attempts at articulating a universal dismissal of the new immigrants. Popular sentiment saw little middle ground in the new immigrants' behaviors. Hence, the song's ambiguities are central to the coding of the new immigrants as alien, possessing "diff'rent craze."

The anti-immigrant sentiment voiced by the song, "The Argentines, the Portuguese and the Greeks," was not the province of workingmen alone. The industrialists assumed a similar posture. Theirs stemmed, however, from a different source. Among the peasantry and working men and women that characterized the new immigrants were those who had intimate experiences with the Bolshevik social and economic experiments. As Don Lescohier, a writer for the *Atlantic Monthly*, remarked in an article on immigration and labor soon after the end of the First World War,

the war had aroused the "self-consciousness of classes heretofore submerged."¹²⁵ He adds:

Their (Capitalists) thought has conceived the workman as a laborer rather than as a father, husband, and citizen. The human has been subordinated to the economic. But the worker has seen himself in an opposite fashion. To him, his home and personal life were important things, his labor but an incidental, necessary experience of his life. They saw him as a tool in production; he saw himself as a citizen. They saw no reason why he should not be satisfied when he got his wages; he saw no reason for being satisfied unless he shared in the determination of the conditions, economic and political, under which he lived.¹²⁶

This new consciousness, fired by their experiences with the abhorrent living conditions in urban centers, moved the new immigrants to vocal protests against unfair labor practices and unsafe working conditions. This unwillingness to be satisfied further compounded their already tenuous position. They became associated with labor unrest and identified as the "backbone of strikes."¹²⁷

The post World War I responses to the new wave of immigrants, subsumed under economic and moral arguments, are marks of an anxiety about the migrant's Sycoraxian polyglossia,

¹²⁵Don D. Lescohier, "Immigration and Labor Supply," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1919, 483.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 485.

¹²⁷Kitty Calavita, "U.S. Immigration and Policy Responses: The Limits of Legislation," in *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 58.

which distressed all monotypic allocutions fostering the idea that America was a nation of immigrants. Hence, contrary a self-fashioned image of a nation open to immigrants, the intersection of the immigrants cultural, linguistic, and religious differences with their identification with progressive labor and social movements incited legislators to restrict their entry into the country. The ensuing legislative debates were framed not as a response to the new immigrants' increasing political visibility, but as a benign attempt at preserving the country's "racial preponderances." These debates resulted in the Quota Restrictions Act introduced by Congress in 1921, which held as its central doctrine the idea that "America's new citizens should resemble its old."¹²⁸ It took as its point of departure the "national-origins" of immigrants, arguing that the amount of immigrants from a given national-origin should correspond to the percentage of that nationality already present in the United States. Taking its cue from the 1910 census, it dramatically limited the numbers of immigrants coming into the country from Eastern and Southern Europe, while encouraging the immigration of Western Europeans.

The restriction in the entry of Eastern and Southern immigrants proved shortsighted, for it negatively impacted the

¹²⁸James Fallows, "Immigration: How It's Affecting U.S.," *The*

labor-supply. Moved to consider alternate sources of labor whose residency could be subjected to the demands of the domestic market, Congress looked south to Mexico. Mexican laborers were seen as an attractive substitute for two reasons. First was the perception that Mexican laborers possessed a "strong attachment to their native land,"¹²⁹ and thus were less likely to become permanent residents. Second, the United States' border with Mexico offered the promise of greater control over the importation and deportation of undocumented laborers. That is, the United States could use the migrant's purported "flexibility," understood as the effortlessness with which they could be imported and deported, to manage domestic labor supply and control wage demands. Thus, as early as the 1920s, the United States began permitting the entry of undocumented Mexicans as seasonal workers for the Southwest agricultural industry. These workers would, at the end of the season, be deported to Mexico.¹³⁰ This policy reached full force in the 1930s with the deportation of thousands of Mexican workers and their families as a response to the Great Depression. The cycle continued in the 1940s with the creation of the *Braceros* program, which allowed for the importation of thousands of unskilled workers to meet the labor

Atlantic Monthly, November 1983, 45.

¹²⁹U.S. Congress, Senate 1911, quoted in Calavita, 58.

¹³⁰ See Eric Schlosser, "In the Strawberry Fields," *The Atlantic*

demands of World War II.¹³¹ With the return of GIs at the end of the war, "a million Mexicans were randomly rounded up in the U.S. and deported" under Operation Wetback.¹³² This flexibility made Mexican migrants the preferred labor source for the U.S. agricultural industry, exempting them from all quota restrictions.

Ironically, the Mexican migrant's linguistic and spatial "flexibility," which was understood by the United States as an attribute that made them malleable to statist interests, placed them at the limits of governmental control. Thus, parallel with the Braceros program emerged a network of linkages and cultural conventions that proved immune to border control. This transborder movement was compounded further by post World War II changes in the global economy. As a response to Mexico's contracting labor market and increasing urbanization, displaced peasants looked, in increasing numbers, to *El Norte's* growing economy, seeking their fortunes in cities from New York to California. But unlike their counterparts, who had entered the country in earlier decades, post World War II undocumented immigrants were a less nomadic workforce. Their sedentary pursuit of work did not, however, go unnoticed. By the 1950s,

Monthly, November 1995.

¹³¹Calavita, 59.

¹³²Marc Cooper, "The Heartland's Raw Deal: How Meatpacking Is

domestic charges of unfair competition had grown significantly in volume. Mexican laborers, who had been welcomed so long as their stay was temporary, were now the targets of increased hostility.

Whilst at the turn of the 20th century, arguments against the destabilizing presence of the migrant were enacted through largely economic frames, if refracted through moral and racial prisms, late 20th century angst about the migrants' Sycoraxian presence are articulated through overt cultural narratives. Neoliberal changes in production and its concomitant labor structures have, if reluctantly, convinced the majority of Americans of the need for a migrant and cheap source of unskilled labor force.

This is illustrated by the restructuring of the meatpacking industry. Until the early 1980s, backed by a strong union, meatpacking workers had been comfortably placed in the middle class, commanding one of the highest wage rates of any other industry. This, however, began to change in the 1980s as a consequence of increased labor disputes, resulting in the closing of thirty plants between 1980 and 1982.¹³³ Out of the plant closings emerged a number of conglomerates set on restructuring the meatpacking industry. They accomplished this by reducing

Creating a New Immigrant Underclass," *The Nation* 1997, 7.

¹³³David Bacon, "Ins Declares War on Labor," *The Nation*, October 25 1999, 4.

transportation costs through the relocation of plants to the rural mid-West to be closer to animal farms. And to avoid a replay of the industry's experience with unionized labor, the meatpacking industry sought to reconfigure its relationship to labor. The new meatpacking plants assumed a decidedly anti-unionist stance, refusing to hire meatpackers with previous union experience. As an added disincentive to unionized labor, they reduced wages from \$19 per hour, at the height of the union activity in the 1980s, to \$6 per hour in the 1990s.

The changes had their desired effect. They prevented the entry of unionized labor into the restructured industry.¹³⁴ While it previously had a stable workforce, the industry now sought to create a highly modular labor force. Through the reduction in real wages and a well-earned reputation for having one of the highest incidents of on the job injuries, the industry, in effect, created an artificial labor shortage. Guided by lessons learned from the agricultural industry, the plants addressed the shortage by hiring undocumented Mexican immigrant workers. The meatpacking industry launched an aggressive recruitment campaign on radio and television along border towns, and "consistently used labor brokers to comb the border areas in south Texas and California to shuttle up new recruits at as much as \$300 a

¹³⁴Ibid.

head.”¹³⁵ These workers are attractive to the meatpacking industry, in large measure, because of their status as “criminal aliens.” The undocumented immigrants’ location, between the dismal economic conditions in their hometowns and the constant threat of deportation from the INS, renders them into a “docile, disempowered work force with an astronomical turnover.”¹³⁶ They find themselves in a situation where they have little choice but to brave the industry’s abhorrent labor practices.

The industry’s highly suspect relationship with the INS further facilitates its exploitation of immigrant workers. Since 1996, the year Clinton’s administration introduced the Immigration Reform and Control Act prohibiting the hiring of undocumented immigrants, the Midwest has been used as a laboratory for the Act’s most aggressive program: Operation Vanguard. Under the Operation, the INS has sought to secure Social Security numbers of all employed by the meatpacking industry. However, despite its efforts and the occasional perfunctory deportation, not a single indictment has been levied against the industry.¹³⁷ The INS explains its posture by noting that its goal is “not to harm operations but work in partnership

¹³⁵Cooper, 5.

¹³⁶Ibid., 1.

¹³⁷Bacon, 2.

to help (industries) maintain a stable, legal workforce."¹³⁸ It seeks to create this "legal, stable" labor-supply by a show of force the intent of which is "to force a political dialogue in which Congress would reassure industries dependent on immigrants that their supply of low-wage labor will not run dry."¹³⁹ Operation Vanguard's ultimate goal is, therefore, to wean industries off of "illegal" immigrants and on to "guest workers."

Operation Vanguard's aim is a sign of the changing tenor of arguments against illegal migrants. While the economic argument had previously focused on the logic of unfair labor competition, current debates stress the logic of social entitlements. At an epiphenomenal level, two principles explain this change. First is the tacit admission that it is, in large part, the continued exploitation of the labor of undocumented workers that accounts for Americans' present living standard. Second is the indirect acceptance of changes in the nature of migrancy. It is an acknowledgement that migrant workers are increasingly becoming permanent residents and that their serpent's tongues have dramatic cultural and political implications for America's national narrative. As a response to these changes, States are meeting the calls for the deportation of undocumented migrants with amendments that curtail the social

¹³⁸Ibid., 4.

services and legal protections available to them.

California is at the forefront of this new policy. In November of 1994, California voters approved by a margin of 51% a measure that would reduce and in some cases eliminate all public services to undocumented immigrants. Under Proposition 187, undocumented immigrants would lose access to social services, basic health care, and primary and secondary public education. Aside from its gross human rights violation, Proposition 187 is significant for the contradiction at its core; namely, it seeks to deny the most basic rights to a population responsible for a significant percent of the State's economy. Thus, we find that the economic argument against immigrants rests on a contradiction that cannot be reconciled by economic explanations.¹⁴⁰

Anti-immigrant sentiments owe less to domestic and international economic fluctuations than to the immigrants' disruptive social and cultural presence. The legal and cultural debates, of which California is only one example, are attempts at disambiguating the Other from the national Self. As David Campbell notes, in reference to an earlier period in American history,

¹³⁹Ibid., 6.

¹⁴⁰ Although I do not wish to minimize the role of immigrants as a social pressure valve, the role attributed to them by the economic argument is out of place with their position in the economy.

the boundaries between inside and outside are only constantly reinscribed when the distinction between inside and outside is ambiguous and in need of differentiation. The intensity of the concern and the tenacity of the efforts to draw distinct boundaries between the English and the Indian serve as evidence, not of the natural separateness of each, but of the actual fluidity and porousness of the boundary between their identity.¹⁴¹

Proposition 187 is thus less a response to the economic burden posed on California by the influx of undocumented immigrants, and more a reaction to the perceived threat immigrants pose to the State's cultural and "racial preponderances." The voter turnout for the amendment clearly reflects this anxiety. In a state where whites are 54% percent of the population, they accounted for 51% of votes in support of the proposition.

The attempt at containing the immigrants' Sycoraxian presence is most salient in the English-Only language movement. The most remarkable aspect of this movement is its marked deviation from past responses. For although language has been a perennial subject of immigration debates, English assumed the de facto role of official language, dismissing the need for legal codification. This assumption began to change in the 1980s with the introduction of a number of bills before state legislatures and with the subsequent approval by the U.S. House of

¹⁴¹David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Representatives of a bill making English the United State's de jure official language. These legal enactments, variously labeled as the "Official English" and "English Only" laws, represent the United States' efforts at cutting off the immigrants' unruly tongues.

As Robert King has noted, a number of issues interconnect in debates about "Official English." Among them, he isolates, the

rights of minorities (Spanish-speaking minorities in particular), the pros and cons of bilingual education, tolerance, how best to educate the children of immigrants, and the place of cultural diversity in school curricula and in American society in general.¹⁴²

The intersection of these themes is most salient at the state level, as California and Arizona so brilliantly illustrate. That is, while at the national level "Official English" debates are wrapped in an antiseptic language, States have been far more deliberate about their use of "Official English" as a surrogate for issues of cultural and racial difference. The States' policies demonstrate that they are, at bottom, not as interested in the assimilation of certain immigrant populations as they are in redrawing cultural and racial boundaries. California is again of great interest for its success in using Arizona's failed

Press, 1992), 126.

¹⁴²Robert D. King, "Should English Be the Law?," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1997, 60.

attempts at an "Official English" law to craft a new "English Only" strategy.

Arizona's experiment with "Official English" was voted into law in 1988 by a narrow margin of 50.5%. The amendment restricted government offices to conducting business "in English and in no other language." It further required government offices to "take all reasonable steps to preserve, protect and enhance the role of the English language as the official language." By prohibiting the use of languages other than English in governmental business, the amendment, in effect, sought to overturn the 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 requiring the printing of bilingual ballots. The amendment was, however, short lived. It faced its major obstacle when Yniguez, a state employee, brought a lawsuit against the state of Arizona challenging the constitutionality of the amendment. Although supporters of "Official English" argued that the measure did not prohibit people from using languages other than English, the Arizona Supreme Court disagreed. Justice James Moeller, writing for the Arizona Supreme Court, argued that the measure went much further than prohibiting the use of languages other than English. He argued that the measure's impact did not stop with public officials and employees, but extended to "the many thousands of persons who would be precluded from receiving essential

information from government employees and elected officials in Arizona governments.”¹⁴³ Although the group responsible for the amendment appealed the decision to the United State Supreme Court, the Justices upheld the Lower Court’s decision.

California’s experiment with “English Only” took a slightly different turn. Rather than follow Arizona’s route and enact a law prohibiting the use of languages other than English in government, it went directly to the classroom with the passing of Proposition 227 in 1998. Proposition 227 - the brainchild of Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley multimillionaire, and Reverend Alice Callaghan - sought to discontinue the practice of bilingual education. The amendment argued that the use of bilingual education, long held as the best method for teaching immigrant children the requisite conceptual skills prior to transitioning them into English immersion classrooms, was not accomplishing its goals. The evidence cited for this case was based on what many proponents of bilingual education interpreted as shoddy science.

Despite its pretense of having immigrant children’s best interest at heart, the “Official English” movement seeks to capture them within a statist, monolingual culture. The move to silence their disruptive tongues is illustrated by President Bill

¹⁴³Howard Fishcher, “‘English Only’ Amendment Hits ‘End of the Road’ in High Court,” *Arizona Daily Star*, Tuesday, January 12, 1999.

Clinton's reference, in a speech in May 1998, to bilingual education as an "intellectual purgatory." Clinton's expression unmasks the movement's facade. In referring to bilingual education as an intellectual purgatory, Clinton dismisses the possibility of an intellectually vibrant heteroglossic environment. Rather, his expression naturalizes monolingualism. By placing the debate within the Christian cosmology, he returns the nation-state, be it heaven or hell, to the domain of discreet linguistic units. To inhabit other than a monolingual space is to assume a state of non-being. Thus, in eliminating bilingual education, the state forces a nationalist decision on students and their parents. That is, parents are being moved to consider not whether their children should attend classrooms where instruction happens both in English and in Spanish, but rather whether their children will be Americans. Proposition 227 dismisses the possibility of a citizen who is equally at home in Spanish as in English.

The "English Only" movement participates in a nationalist-cum-patriotic narrative. It not only codes the American self as monolingual, but also draws its impetus from a conception of American history that moves from "discovery, settlement, ingenuity, and self-definition."¹⁴⁴ This is the context for

¹⁴⁴ John Muthyala, "Reworlding America: The Globalization of

Clinton's purgatory metaphor. The metaphor scripts the history of the New World as the continuation of a divine historical progression that brings peoples from different European countries to a new continent and produces one people out of the many. Monolingualism's exclusionary force erases from the United States all traces of an Other whose tongue cannot be silenced by the nation. Clinton's assertion, in effect, resists José Martí's and José Saldívar's "Our America." It refuses to embrace a vision of America as a zone of encounters that cannot be silenced under the weight of monotopic discourses.¹⁴⁵

Forget the Alamo

As the next two chapters will show, the "English Only" movement is only one in a series of statist strategies that seek to contain the migrants' Sycoraxian dispersal. However, contrary to assertions that movements as "English Only" enable the state to recover its national compliment through a redrawing of geographical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries, the Sycorax dispersal cannot be appropriated into such a dialectics. Insofar

American Studies," *Cultural Critique* 47 (2001): 95.

¹⁴⁵ See José David Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History*, ed. Stanley Fish and Fredric Jameson, *Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

as a Sycoraxian stance is non-dialectical, its fluidity resists capture into identity as difference.

Benítez-Rojo's *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* offers a productive entry into such a Sycoraxian inspired relation to the nation.¹⁴⁶ He argues that the Caribbean is "one of the least known regions of the modern world."¹⁴⁷ This is not for lack of scholarship. Rather, he contends, it is the result of Western scholars' inability to go beyond a first reading in their encounter with the Caribbean. European scholars read the Caribbean as a Calibanic reflection of the West, an appropriation that places the Caribbean in the service of Western history. Benítez-Rojo's project offers a second reading, a reading "in which every text begins to reveal its own textuality."¹⁴⁸

He argues that the processes that formed the Caribbean endowed it with a multiplicity of codes that "holds the region suspended in a soup of signs."¹⁴⁹ The complexity of these codes lends a rhizomatic quality to the Caribbean. That is, they inextricably link the Caribbean to the machines of Western

¹⁴⁶Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). For an equally interesting work, see Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*.

¹⁴⁷Antonio Benítez-Rojo, "The Repeating Island," in *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*, ed. Gustavo Perez-Firmat (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 85.

¹⁴⁸Ibid, 86.

expansion. The complex patterns of flow and disruption of these machines gave rise not to a *mestizo* culture - understood as "having reached a kind of 'unity' or 'totality'" - but to a system of intense conflicts and ambivalences. This intensity resists forms, producing a Sycoraxian space, a space without a center or boundaries. The Caribbean is thus everywhere and nowhere in specific: it is "not terrestrial," but "fluvial and marine." He adds, "We are dealing here with a culture of bearings, not of roots; of approximations, not of exactitudes."¹⁵⁰ The Caribbean is thus a meta-archipelago.

The concept of the meta-archipelago resonates with the migrant's condition for it highlights the impossibility of return. Benítez-Rojo speaks of this impossibility in largely spatial terms. He negates spatial return by arguing that the Caribbean is by its very nature a concept of dispersal. That is:

The culture of the meta-archipelago is an eternal return, a detour without destination or mileposts, a roundabout that leads nowhere but back home; it is a feedback machine, as is the sea, the wind, the Milky Way, the novel, the natural world, the food chain, the sonata.¹⁵¹

The meta-archipelago thus redefines the concept of a diaspora. It dissociates the diaspora from its myth of a geographical

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 93.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

return, setting it afloat in a nomadic space.

This dissociation complicates the imperial allocution that conjoins literatures, languages, and cultures into geo-political nation-states. The meta-archipelago negates the diasporic search for "the precise thing that was lost."¹⁵² Rather, it offers that all homelands are always homelands of the mind. This is not, however, to deny the existence of geo-political entities called India, Africa, the United States, or Mexico. It is to push these entities into the domain of the polyrhythmic. Benítez-Rojo's polyrhythm argues that the nation, as a cultural and civilizational construct, resides in the performative. That is, the nation is not a fixed category of being. Rather, it must be understood as a network of intensities and desires. Nations are thus improvisational processes that, though they may be recorded, defy "fixity."

Benítez-Rojo's meta-archipelago is not without its shortfalls. Although it adopts a "fluvial and marine" metaphor, the meta-archipelago fails, at moments, to overcome the Calibanic construction of difference as negation. That is, Benítez-Rojo arrives at the meta-archipelago through a discourse that views European cultures as Other. Caribbean identity becomes the

¹⁵²Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 10.

wholesale negation of European culture. He notes:

[T]he Caribbean is not an apocalyptic world; it is not a phallic world in pursuit of the vertical desires of ejaculation and castration. The notion of the apocalypse does not exist within the culture of the Caribbean. The notions of crime and punishment, of your money or your life, of *patria o muerte*, have nothing to do with Caribbean culture; these are Western propositions (remember Malaparte again) which the Caribbean adopts only in terms of declamation, or rather, in terms of a first reading.¹⁵³

The suggestion that the Caribbean is a distinct cultural species greatly undermines his argument. It allows constructs that articulate identity through exclusion to enter through the meta-archipelago's backdoor.

Benítez-Rojo's Hegelian disposition is evident in his conscious distancing of his work from those of Deleuze and Guattari. He notes that his machine is not "a Deleuze & Guattari model." His is not a system of relative machines, a "flow machine," but one of simultaneous flows and interruptions. The will to arrest, however, prevents Benítez-Rojo's meta-archipelago from achieving an "absolute deterritorialization." The dialectical aspect of his "machine" traps the Caribbean in a "feed-back" mechanism that forever seeks to reterritorialize. In tracing a line of flight that is uniquely Caribbean, he not only returns to an established system of signs, but also denies

himself the potential for freedom.

These shortcomings do not, however, invalidate Benítez-Rojo's ideas *in toto*. His meta-archipelago offers much that is new and helpful in thinking about the effect of the migrant's Sycoraxian disposition. His concepts of polyrhythm and the "fluvial and marine" allow for a more nuanced engagement with the limits of the nation. They make it possible to view migrant identity through a lens other than the territoriality of the state. The polyrhythmic allows for postcolonial identity to be read as "performances" in both time and space, as "flux interrupted by rhythm."¹⁵⁴ Moreover, Benítez-Rojo's view of rhythm prevents closure, requiring an engagement in "nomadic thought." That is, the rhythm machine that Benítez-Rojo envisions is improvisational in nature, always new and irreducible.

John Sayles's 1996 film *Lone Star* is a compelling instantiation of how the migrant's Sycoraxian disposition structures a meta-archipelago. The film revolves around the discovery of a skeleton in the desert outside the town of Rio Country, Texas. Sayles uses the "riddle of the bones" to unearth the forgotten history of the border town, and, more importantly,

¹⁵³Benítez-Rojo, "The Repeating Island," 93.

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 98.

to extend the border's complex cultural texture into a commentary on America's national, cultural identity. Sam Deeds, Rio County's sheriff, begins his investigation with a rather clear assumption. When he learns that the remains found in the desert belonged to the Town's 1950s sheriff, Charlie Wade, a corrupt and abusive man, Sam concludes that Wade could only have been murdered by Buddy Deeds, Wade's deputy and Sam's father. The story thus begins with a metamorphosis. It changes from the search for the truth about a murder into a quasi-nationalist narrative. Sam's dogged pursuit of what he assumes is his father's guilt takes on the character of parricide. To establish himself as the new order, Sam must prove his father to be other than what the Town's people think. He must, in effect, kill the father.

Lone Star, however, resists such linear narrative. Through a series of flashbacks and narrational reversals, Sayles' structures Sam's search into a complex archeology that is incommensurable with monotopic discourses. Sam's search for a self-untouched by his father's deeds produces an allegorical history of Rio County and of identity in general. The stories of the inhabitants of Rio County mirror the story of the Town. Much like Wade's bleached bones, Rio County surfaces as a palimpsest. We learn from a Latino resident that Rio County has an older, if

submerged, history. The town was built around the Indian town of Perdido (Lost), which was flooded by Anglos to build a lake around which the Rio County could expand. However, contrary to its name, Perdido refuses to be lost. It resurfaces in the story of inhabitants like O. O, one of the town's few black residents, traces his history to African slaves and Seminole Indians. His black Seminole museum serves in the film as a negation of uncontaminated roots. It is a signpost of the inherent mixture of all identity.

Moreover, the story of Perdido resonates with the Chicano history of Aztlán. Chicanos argue that, contrary to "official" history, the Northern Mexican who migrates to the United States is doing nothing other than returning home. They contend that the Aztecs are direct descendents of the Native Americans who lived in the Southwest United States prior to the arrival of Anglos in the Continent. The cartography they produce envisions the Southwest as neither Mexico nor the United States, but a part of the Aztlán. Hence, as Gloria Anzaldúa notes, the U.S.-Mexico border is an open wound where "the Third World grates against the first and bleeds."¹⁵⁵ On the border's exposed scab is written another identity, which, like Perdido, surfaces in its cultural tensions and disjunctions.

¹⁵⁵ Anzaldúa, 3.

The Sycoraxian history of Rio County manifests most forcefully in Pilar and Sam's relationship. Pilar, the daughter of Mercedes Cruz, a woman who illegally crossed the Rio Grande into the town of Rio County, has been in love with Sam since high school. However, much to the teens' distress, their parents strictly forbade their relationship. Twenty-three years later, Sam and Pilar are brought together by Sam's investigation of Wade's murder. They rekindle their relationship only to learn that they share the same father. In a revealing scene at the end of the film, Pilar and Sam are seated on the hood of Sam's car at the drive-through theater they frequented as teens. Pilar, shocked by the news, refuses to have Deeds' and Mercedes' history govern hers and Sam's future. Defying history, Pilar declares, "Forget the Alamo!" The film ends with Sam and Pilar gazing at the blank projection screen of an outdoor movie theater. Before them lies the blank canvas of historical possibilities. *Lone Star* offers the possibility that all identities are the product of incestuous encounters, and thus countervails the search for unalloyed identities.



Figure 1: Sam and Pilar gazing at the blank screen of a drive-in movie theater.

Much as with Ouloguem's *Bound to Violence*, *Lone Star* does not resolve the historical tensions of colonial encounter through appeasing narratives of a global hybrid future. Pilar's historical negation does not simply eschew the sedimentation of identity into opposition. What stands out about her affirmation is that it resists creating another statist history, this time in the form of a mestizo culture. Pilar escapes the Calibanic drive by refusing to be a mother-object. She frames the possibility of continuing her relationship with Sam through a refusal of motherhood, explaining that after the birth of her last child she became unable to birth anymore children. The inability to birth stands as a rejection of community as identity. Thus, her utterance, "Forget the Alamo!" does not mark the beginning of a

new community. Rather, it is a Sycoraxian historical enactment that frees identity into a fluid meta-archipelago.

Conclusion: Beyond Home and the World

Sycorax's relational poetics gives rise to a fluid politics that transcends the boundaries of the nation. This is perhaps the most salient dimension of the postcolonial moment. The immigrants' polyphonal accents and forked tongues conjure the postcolonial subject as a fluid agent that exceeds the bounds of the nation and its monotopic discourses. In this new configuration, Caliban has a limited position. The domain of the colonial, as an all encompassing and oppositional discourse, no longer holds for the majority of postcolonial migrants. This is not to suggest that colonialism and its after effects are not felt by much of the world. Rather, it is to speak of postcoloniality as a political and philosophical disposition that expands the limits of the political discourse beyond the narrow bounds of the colonial and national. Migrants' Sycoraxian presence creates a nomadic space of fluid political categories and filiations. It opens the subject to a process of becoming that makes possible an ever-expanding network of connections and linkages.

This Sycoraxian outlook has occasioned a profound disquiet

in the West. Increased movements of people and the acceleration of encounters have profoundly destabilized imperial allocutions that seek to construct nations out of literatures, languages, and cultures. The monotopic hermeneutics that governs these discourses are rendered transparent by the migrant's Sycoraxian tongue. The migrants' movement between identity categories and spaces has resulted in a proliferation of strategies to shore-up borders and to delimit cultural and civilizational parameters. It has, as chapters 3 and 4 illustrate, led to attempts at recovering the imperial construct in the guise of a cosmopolitan present, followed by a simultaneous increase in statist surveillance. However, the migrant's Sycoraxian mobility foils such attempts at statist capture, giving rise to ever-changing political possibilities.

CHAPTER 3

CAN THE POSTCOLONIAL BE COSMOPOLITAN?

Things have however fallen apart, the center has not held, and mere anarchy is in the process of being unleashed upon what used to be called "the learned world."¹⁵⁶

Today's emergency is no longer an acute, exceptional condition or critical phase that exists for a limited duration before things revert to their more stable, normal state. This emergency is a chronic, routine condition to which we are increasingly habituated.¹⁵⁷

Late-modern migrancy has a profound impact on the nation-state's function as the modernist's principal locus of filiation. The Sycoraxian character of the late-modern migrant, expressed most acutely in polyglot and creolist dispositions, dislodges the nation and the ethnos from their positions in identity articulations. The migrant's multifocal attachments question the viability of all exclusive allegiances. The technologies that have enabled the unprecedented flow of migrants across borders have also generalized an existential condition that was previously associated exclusively with historical diasporas. Migrancy thus emerges as a generalized condition of late-modernity. This condition has altered the way in which the West

¹⁵⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994).

¹⁵⁷ Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 283.

defines allegiances. That is, while the migrant's Sycoraxian position fosters a movement that complicates socio-political modes of attachment, the West returns to the modernist loci of identity: it rearticulates allegiances through an oscillation between the universal and the exclusive. Put differently, the West moves between the rearticulation of nation and nationalism and the enunciation of cosmopolitanism. While I will address the rearticulation of nationalism in Chapter 4, in what follows I interrogate the condition of possibility for cosmopolitanism as a fundamental humanist allegiance.

The cosmopolitan assignation, which until recently was the exclusive preserve of affluent and well traveled Westerners, has entered our lexicon as a descriptor of a generalized condition of being-in-the-world. It is now as applicable to the Western traveler as it is to postcolonial migrants. The decreased resistance of borders and the escalating pace of cultural encounters have compelled us to seek discursive structures that permit a reconfiguration of identity narratives. Contrary to the erstwhile colonial narratives, present trends eschew the claustrophobic confines of meta-narratives for ever-widening cosmopolitan spaces. Cosmopolitanism thus assumes the role of one of the de facto lens for deciphering the socio-political landscape of the late 20th century.

However, the emergent cosmopolitanism is haunted. It

surfaces not as a new concept, but as the return of an idea that reaches back to the language of colonialism and empire to steady itself. It brings forth the historical specters that have haunted the West's relationship with its Other, creating, in a Benjaminian sense, a distinction between the "original" cosmopolitan and its postcolonial variants. It implicitly qualifies the Other as a new genus of the cosmopolitan, a qualification that negates the Other's membership in the cosmopolitan universal. This disjunctive moment creates the pathos that so often permeates the works of Third World intellectual migrants. They are reminded that their arrival as cosmopolitans is at best enigmatic. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*. Described as a work of fiction, *The Enigma of Arrival* stands as an uncompromising meditation on the migrants' condition. In athrenodic tone, it makes the case that the Other arrives not to rhythms of celebration, but to the despair of a world that at every turn reminds him of his incongruousness. As Naipaul writes:

The idea of ruin and dereliction, of out-of-placeness, was something I felt about myself, attached to myself: a man from another hemisphere, another background, coming to rest in middle life in the cottage of a half-neglected estate, an estate full of reminders of its Edwardian past, with few connections with the present. An oddity among the estates and big houses of the valley,

and I a further oddity in its grounds. I felt unanchored and strange. Everything I saw in those early days . . .made that feeling more acute. I felt my presence in that old valley was part of something like an upheaval, a change in the course of the history of the country.¹⁵⁸

This sense of being at odds with the world carries into the writing project. To belong to the world, the migrant must create it in his own image. He stands therefore in a different space from that of his Western counterpart. This is a reality that preoccupies the Other, as he understands that despite his best efforts he does not easily wear the cosmopolitan mantle. This realization comes across most noticeably in attempts by postcolonial writers to alter cosmopolitanism to fit the incongruous spaces inhabited by Third World migrants. These efforts have produced such problematic concepts as "rooted" and "vernacular" cosmopolitanism, testimonials to cosmopolitanism's uneasy fit. In what follows, I explore the contradictory impulses that govern the resurgence of cosmopolitanism. My interest here rests not solely with cosmopolitanism's linkage to an earlier discursive structure, but, more importantly, I want to interrogate the forces responsible for its reactivation as a significant conceptual lens in our understanding of the postcolonial migrant's experiences.

¹⁵⁸V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), 15.

The Return of Cosmopolitanism

Debates about the function of cosmopolitanism as an antidote to present social and political ills reached a climax in the pages of the *Boston Review* with the publication of Martha Nussbaum's essay, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," to which a distinguished group of twenty-nine philosophers, political theorists, and literary critics were asked to respond.¹⁵⁹ The essay, Nussbaum acknowledges, was, in part, a reaction to Richard Rorty's and Sheldon Hackney's call for an American identity informed not by the "politics of difference," but by a return to the foundational precepts of Americanism. In their works, Rorty and Hackney ask to readers to "rejoice" in the qualities that cohere Americans into a nation and to eschew the centrifugal impulses of multiculturalism. Rorty's entreaties, for example, are a reaction to the belief that left leaning American intellectuals have exchanged the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey and Walt Whitman for the post-structural and deconstructionist continental philosophy of Michel Foucault and

¹⁵⁹Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," *Boston Review* (1994). The debates were reprinted in their entirety in Joshua Cohen, ed., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Martha C. Nussbaum and Respondents (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1996).

Jacques Derrida.¹⁶⁰ The result, he maintains, is the academe's movement away from the practical necessity of building a democratic populace to the construction of increasingly fractured "corporate identities."

The American university is the principal object of anxiety in the works of these cultural commentators. Riding the wake of the Civil Rights movement and the concomitant increase in the numbers of minority faculty and students in university campuses across the United States, the academe emerged in the early 1980s as the focal point in multicultural debates. The university's shifting complexion incited calls for a reevaluation of the curriculum. Dissatisfied by ossified and myopic academic curricula, minority students called on universities to reformulate the canon to reflect historical and cultural contributions of heretofore excluded populations. While these appeals were generally welcomed by Anglo-American academics, they produced an extraordinary disquiet among the professed guardians of academic standards. Writers and commentators as varied as Allan Bloom and Gertrude Himmelfarb professed a fear that this movement would in time erode the very fabric of Western intellectual life. Replacing the great books, the classics of

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion of Rorty's response to current trends in the academe, see Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

Western literary tradition, with books such as Americo Paredes' *With a Pistol in His Hand*, they argued, was a sign that universities were no longer places for "rigorous" intellectual exchanges, but loci for the celebration of the "victim revolution."¹⁶¹

Dubbed the cultural wars, these debates expanded beyond the borders of the academe. In the public arena, they resonated with the dread that America's democratic ethos was imperiled by the rising tide of "identity politics."¹⁶² In responses to the ascent of minorities in the academy and to calls for the reformation of the academic curricula, the debates assumed a nationalist character. The nationalist tenor of these exchanges is registered, for example, in Sheldon Hackney's presentation at The Second Annual Jerome B. Wiesner Symposium on The Future of the Government/University Partnership: The Humanities and Arts held at the University of Michigan in 1997. Hackney, then Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, participated in a panel on "Imagining a National Cultural Policy." Although his exposition of the merits and necessity for a federally sponsored cultural policy outlines, at the opening, the social benefits of

University Press, 1998).

¹⁶¹ For an encompassing analysis of these debates see, Lawrence W Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

¹⁶² See, for example, Seyla Benhabib, "The Liberal Imagination and

a well-educated citizenry, it soon assumes a nationalist tone. He argues that the need for a concerted federal effort toward the arts and humanities is all the more pressing considering the cultural changes facing the country. He notes that a national cultural education

helps us understand who we are and where we might be going, where we can choose to go . . . if we lose that sense of our past we will cease to cohere. And that is what we have been feeling as a society for the last ten or fifteen years in this gradual fraying of the bonds, if you will, that binds us to each other. . .

Hackney's assertions are not mere responses to disagreeable aesthetic choices or to the right of minorities to be represented in the curriculum or to participate as equals in the civic arena. Rather, his is an attempt at refiguring the national character. His appeal is to define the national self against a marginal and increasingly immigrant Other: it is a case for circling the metaphorical wagons around those activities, histories, and values that he contends constitute America as a nation.

Alarmed by the inwardly looking gesture of this and similar movements, Nussbaum calls for a cosmopolitan politics, a politics that looks to the rational capacity of all human beings as the basis for a universal civic education. She finds inspiration for her "cosmopolitan education" in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home*

the Four Dogmas of Multiculturalism," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 12,

and the World.¹⁶³ Filtered through Nikhil's wife, Bimala, Tagore masterfully contrasts Sandip's fervent adherence to *Swadeshi's Bande Mataram* (Hail Motherland) to Nikhil's perceptive understanding of the dangers of blind patriotism. Sandip's effusive patriotism captivates Bimala. Caught in his rhetoric, Bimala chides her husband's lack of passion. However, when Sandip's patriotic fervor breaks out in communal violence, she learns, though tragically late, of the wisdom of Nikhil's assertion that "to worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it." Condensing the story into a parable of the "defeat of a reasonable and principled cosmopolitanism by the forces of nationalism and ethnocentrism," Nussbaum uses *The Home and the World* to formulate a civic rationality that opens the individual to the world.¹⁶⁴

However, Nussbaum's cosmopolitan education is not simply a gesture towards the Other: it is a pedagogy. As a classicist, she derives her pedagogical imperative from the Stoics. She returns to Diogenes Laertius' allocution, "I am a citizen of the world," to affirm a curriculum which teaches students to give their "first allegiance to no mere form of government, no

no. 2 (1999).

¹⁶³ For an equally powerful, if less cited, critique of nationalism, see Rabindranath Tagore, *Gora*, ed. 20 (Madras, India: MacMillan India Limited, 1989).

¹⁶⁴ Cohen, ed., 5.

temporal power, but to the moral community made up by the humanity of all human beings.”¹⁶⁵ To accomplish this being-toward-another, the student/citizen of the world must adopt an imaginative posture that affords entry into the “lives of peoples of other nations.” That is, her pedagogical practice safeguards against the dangers of nationalism and ethnocentrism by promoting cross-cultural inquiry. Responding to commentators like Gertrude Himmelfarb, Nussbaum maintains that America’s hope of building “inclusive and spiritually rich academy” is predicated on honest scholarship of minority cultures. This effort, she suggests, must be understood “beyond the current tendency to see any demand for study of a minority group as mere identity politics, or mere whining or ‘victimology’.”¹⁶⁶ It is through this honest gesture towards the Other, she affirms, that communities come to understand their own inner divisions, a knowledge that recuperates a Kantian structure of universal hospitality.

The history of area studies is instructive here. As a “host at last,” area studies reflect post World War II concerns about a world increasingly recognized as multicultural and fluid. As Vincente Rafael notes, area studies

furnished a screen for re-creating the sense and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 151.

sensation of a regimented yet egalitarian union of men. In doing so, the discourse of area studies reproduced the liberal ideal of managed pluralism that would bind the diversity of the world within the flexible authority of experts and practitioners.¹⁶⁷

Its "liberal ideal," however, misfires as a consequence of its organizing structure. The forces that prompted the area studies movement were both concerned with growing diversity and a need to develop structures to contain and manage difference. Area studies are thus no less the products of the political and strategic necessities of the post-war period than a variant of the pre-established conventions of classical scholarship. Hence, the geopolitical map of area studies overlaps an earlier linguistic cartography. The over-imposition of the geographic onto the linguistic is most evident in the link between area studies and "linguistic competence."¹⁶⁸ Not unlike the study of ancient Greek and Roman societies, area studies maintain that linguistic fluency is the key component in such scholarly pursuits. The linguistic emphasis affirms a correlation between language and a nation's culture, which returns area studies to the purview of philology.

¹⁶⁷ Vincente Rafael, "The Culture of Area Studies in the United States," *Social Text*, no. 41 (1994): 95. While the geopolitical divisions inaugurated by World War II were instrumental in the formation of area studies, the 1970s influx of immigrants from the Third World further entrenched the academic division of labor linking nations and languages. For an elaboration of these changes, see Mignolo.

Area studies thus realize national spaces from within a matrix of "images of break, rupture, and disjunction."¹⁶⁹ By inscribing the nation within discreet linguistic units, they participate in the maintenance of the ethnographic isomorphism between spaces and cultures. That is,

the distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy 'naturally' discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies.¹⁷⁰

Through this discourse, national spaces become homologous with difference. The nation is converted into a "neutral historical grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed."¹⁷¹ The logic of space that governs the structure of area studies transmutes them from liberal, pluralistic spaces, to loci where difference is explicated through the "authority of experts and practitioners." They become arenas where non-Western interlocutors are housed, serving as translators of the Other's motives and history for a Western audience. As Rafael writes:

Just as the humanities were meant to cultivate a

¹⁶⁸Rafael: 93.

¹⁶⁹Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.: 7.

self that was authorized to transmit the legacy of the past, area studies would develop a body of elite scholars capable of providing knowledge about other nations to the benefit of "our" nation.¹⁷²

The non-Western interlocutors are rendered into Calibans, requiring "vigilant supervision and guidance until they could be assimilated into the epistemologic field of the disciplines and the governing structures of higher education."¹⁷³ Thus, in its conservative function, area studies attend to the disciplining of difference rather than to its celebration.

The containment strategy evinced by area studies stands in stark contrast to Nussbaum's contention that the study of minority cultures leads students to the realization that what they "take to be natural and normal is merely parochial and habitual."¹⁷⁴ She notes,

The Stoic, in fact, must be conversant with local differences, since knowledge of these is inextricably linked to our ability to discern and respect the dignity of humanity in each person.¹⁷⁵

In the United States, she suggests, it is only through efforts at understanding the history of Africans and African-Americans that Anglo-Americans will be able to overcome racism and the crippling "discomfort and guilt" that is a part of America's race

¹⁷²Rafael: 93.

¹⁷³Ibid.: 94.

¹⁷⁴ Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, 53.

consciousness. There is here a rather dangerous logical fallacy. Nussbaum supposes that a community's knowledge of the Otherness within realizes in a Levinasian embrace of the foreigner. Western history, however, leaves little room for such optimism. While examples abound, the sophistry of Nussbaum's contention is accentuated in America's relationship to its Black population. America's preoccupation with racial difference is nowhere more visible than in the 20th century explosion of urban social sciences. While the fixation with racial markings is not exclusive to urban ethnography, it is in the late 1960s study of "black ghetto" culture that we find an intensification of efforts at explaining what Ulf Hannerz calls "essential Negroness." These studies portray the inner-city as the sanctum sanctorum of "the real nigger."¹⁷⁵ They look to the inner-city to understand not what might explain specific behaviors and actions among a segment of the urban poor, but to articulate a monolithic culture that explains a perceived pathology. Thus we see the emergence of the ghetto as the sine qua non of American dystopia, the residence of

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹⁷⁶ See, among others, Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), David Schultz, *Coming up Black: Patterns of Ghetto Socialization* (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969). For comparable late 1990s, see David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood* (New York: Broadway Books, 1997), Ron Suskind, *A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League* (New York: Broadway

“real niggers” and the “welfare queens.” These ethnographic engagements have played a “key role in marking ‘blackness’ and defining black culture to the ‘outside’ world.”¹⁷⁷

While America’s fixation with racial distinctions has produced an exemplary anthropology of difference, knowledge about African-Americans has not led to an embracing of the racial Other. Contrary to Nussbaum’s assertion, the proliferation of scholarship on African and African-American history and culture and the commercial and cultural successes of African-American images and art forms have not made America more hospitable to the black Other.¹⁷⁸ The shooting of Amadou Diallo evinces the lethal consequence of this inhospitability. On February 4, 1999, four plainclothes officers of the New York Street Crime Unit confronted Diallo in the foyer of his Bronx apartment. Diallo responded to the officers by reaching for his wallet. While it is impossible to discern whether he was instinctively seeking his identification cards or assumed he was being robbed and thus sought to surrender his wallet, his reaction met with a barrage of 41 bullets, of which nineteen found their target. Diallo, the young street vendor and student of mathematics and computer

Books, 1998).

¹⁷⁷ Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Cultural Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 16.

¹⁷⁸ This process is crystallized in Richard J. Hernstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in*

science, was dead.

Jonathan Foreman, writing in the *National Review*, notes that though it is upsetting to think of Diallo's bullet riddled body, it is absurd to infer from the number of bullets fired that the officers' actions were racially motivated. Rather, he declares, the officers were in the "grip of profound fear" when they discharged their weapons.¹⁷⁹ Under the circumstances, and given the rapid-fire capacity of their 9mm semiautomatic Glocks, 41 shots in under two minutes is not unreasonable, he contends. Stanley Crouch substantiates Foreman's assertion. In the aftermath of the torture of Abner Louima by NYPD officers, Crouch was invited by Mayor Rudy Giuliani to participate in a police-community taskforce. As a member of the taskforce, he took part in a series of exercises designed to acquaint the community with situations and stresses officers face as a matter of course. At the end of his stint in the police academy, Crouch echoed Foreman, averring, "believe all that stuff goes down much faster than you ever think and it is almost impossible to discern how many rounds you have fired when it seems that there is no other choice."¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, as Michael Grunwald has noted, though

American Life (New York: Free Press, 1996).

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan Foreman, "The Agony of Diallo - Black and Blue in New York, Again," *National Review*, March 20 2000, 21.

¹⁸⁰ Stanley Crouch, *Diallo Is a Martyr, but the Cops Aren't Murderers*(Salon.com, 2000, accessed 2002); available from

it might be technically feasible, if not easy, for a police officer to empty the clip of a 9mm semiautomatic pistol on a suspect, it has "never been done to a white victim."¹⁸¹ Moreover, Foreman's use of "profound fear" as a mediating factor raises disturbing questions about the "measure of value placed on Black men's lives."¹⁸²

To comprehend Diallo's "death by actuary,"¹⁸³ it is necessary to understand America's deployment of racial regimes in the construction of the national community. Put differently, to appreciate the limits of Nussbaum's education toward world citizenship, one must examine the ways in which race anchors American citizenship. It is to argue that race is not merely a vestige of a less enlightened age, but that it has a persistent and appreciable social and "psychological wage."¹⁸⁴ Discussions about universal civic education and world citizenship must "be alive to the preeminent place of 'race' in making and

<http://dir.salon.com/news/col/crouch/2000/03/01/police/index.html>.

While Crouch is eloquent on the reasons why the four officers are not murderers, he is circumspect on the cause for which Diallo is a martyr. Equally disturbing is the agency implied by the concept. Martyrdom suggests a degree of choice that Diallo certainly did not have.

¹⁸¹ Michael Grunwald, "Unarmed Immigrant Killed by N.Y. Police Is Mourned," *The Washington Post*, February 13 1999, A03.

¹⁸² Clyde R. Taylor, "Editorial," *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire* 3, no. 1 (2000): 5.

¹⁸³ Patricia J. Williams, "Better Safe. . .?," *The Nation*, March 11 2002, 9.

¹⁸⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the continued social and cultural capital of race, see Derrick A. Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

legitimizing these cultural and political judgments."¹⁸⁵ It is only through such an appraisal that one will understand how Diallo came to embody all that is negative and dangerous. Moreover, such a reading exposes the social constructs that made the NYPD's overwhelmingly violent actions legally justifiable and acceptable to a majority of Anglo-Americans.¹⁸⁶

In the wake of Diallo's death, the events preceding the shooting assumed a mercurial quality. As Patricia Williams notes,

the four plainclothes officers were initially described as being part of a team patrolling for illegal gun possessions. In the days that followed, they were redescribed as being on the hunt for a rapist. Then a serial rapist. Then a serial rapist-murderer. Then a serial rapist-murderer whose description matched that of the victim.¹⁸⁷

Through the case's changing and increasingly more sinister narratives, one detail remained constant; namely, that Diallo, a young black man, fitted the description of a criminal and, tautologically, that he inhabited a dangerous space. These

¹⁸⁵ Gilroy, 281.

¹⁸⁶ Despite the torture of Abner Louima and the shooting death of Diallo, Mayor Rudy Giuliani and New police commissioner, Howard Safir, remained models of action. They were touted across the country as the agents responsible for bringing order to New York City. Mayor Giuliani, for example, 14 hours after Diallo's death, left New York for Pennsylvania to "regale a banquet room of white Republicans with the story of how he'd tamed New York." Wayne Barrett, "Raging Bull: Giuliani's Knee-Jerk Cop Defense Is as Incendiary as It Is Inaccurate," *The Village Voice*, February 13-23 1999. See also Timothy Lynch, *'We Own the Night': Amadou Diallo's Deadly Encounter with New York City's Street Crime Unit* (New York: Cato Institute, 2000), Briefing Papers.

¹⁸⁷ Patricia J. Williams, "Usual Suspects," *The Nation*, March 8

factors, readers - black and white - were told, legally justified the lethal action. Moreover, in an ironic shift Williams calls the claim of "victim responsibility," Diallo became guilty of setting in motion the events that lead to his death.¹⁸⁸ Arguing that he reached for his ID out of a knee-jerk response inspired by fear of the INS, defense attorneys leaked to the media details of Diallo's asylum petition. While from an upper middle class Guinean family, Diallo misrepresented himself to the INS, applying for asylum as a Mauritanian brutalized in a 1989 ethnic pogrom. Alarmed that his lie had caught up with him, lawyers for the defense argued, Diallo responded aggressively when approached by the officers. The fault thus lay not with the practices of NYPD's Street Crime Unit, but with the essential violence and untrustworthiness of all blacks.

Responding to criticisms about the injurious nature of racial profiling that followed Diallo's death, John Derbyshire's essay, "In Defense of racial Profiling: Where is our common sense?" intersects with both Rorty's caution about the dangers of corporatized identities and Nussbaum's call for education in difference. While evincing an unrepentant racial enmity, Derbyshire's arguments highlight the racial tension at the core

1999, 10.

¹⁸⁸ Patricia J. Williams, "Spirit-Murdering the Messenger: The Discourse of Fingerprinting as the Law's Response to Racism,"

of Rorty's and Nussbaum's arguments. Like Rorty, Derbyshire believes that "Americans are drifting away from the concept of belonging to a single nation."¹⁸⁹ However, while he shares in Rorty's diagnosis, his prescription is not to eclipse racial and cultural differences with a pragmatic national identity, but to articulate the national through an acceptance of the materiality of racial differences. His position, ironically, moves him to accept Nussbaum's argument. That is, though he uses the education toward difference for radically different purposes, Derbyshire agrees with Nussbaum, on principal, on the need to educate Americans about the nation's internal differences. Hence, about contemporary appeals for civil rights and the need for greater vigilance against social inequalities, especially when articulated through race, he notes,

In the matter of race, I think the Anglo-Saxon world has taken leave of its senses. The campaign to ban racial profiling is, as I see it, a part of that larger, broad-fronted assault on common sense that our over-educated, over-lawyered society has been enduring for some forty years now, and whose roots are in a fanatical egalitarianism, a grim determination not to face up to the realities of group difference, a theological attachment to the doctrine that the sole and sufficient explanation for all such differences is "racism" – which is to say, the malice and cruelty of white people – and a nursed and petted guilt towards the behavior of

University of Miami Law Review 42, no. 127 (1987): 135.

¹⁸⁹ John Derbyshire, "In Defense of Racial Profiling: Where Is Our Common Sense?," *The National Review*, February 19 2001.

our ancestors.¹⁹⁰

In Derbyshire's enunciation, the need for educating nationals about the Otherness within is paramount. However, contrary to Nussbaum's salutary conception of multicultural education, Derbyshire deploys multiculturalism in an anthropology of difference that recruits and stabilizes difference in the articulation of a national self.

Echoing the museum effect of area studies, racial profiling, the principle of differentiation of police forces across the country, is, in Derbyshire's view, a misnomer. The term, he contends, assumes that the police officer who stops and frisks a young African-American man or the clerk who refuses to grant an African-American woman access to the store are being unreasonable or infringing on their civil rights. Although the officer and the clerk are plainly reacting to stereotypes, he affirms, "a negative stereotype can be correct, and even useful."¹⁹¹ Hence, to act with suspicion to African-Americans is to exercise common sense. He adds:

A policeman who concentrates a disproportionate amount of his limited time and resources on young black men is going to uncover far more crimes – and therefore be far more successful in his career – than one who biases his attention toward, say,

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 39.

middle-aged Asian women.¹⁹²

This is the syllogism that accounts for the NYPD Street Crime Unit's response to Diallo and to countless other similar "incidents."¹⁹³ It erroneously affirms that African-Americans live in high crime neighborhoods and commit more crimes than any other segment of American population, and, thus, law enforcement agents are justified in not only profiling young African-Americans, but in responding with the highest order of force. Derbyshire's construct, one that finds increasing popularity among large segments of the Anglo-American population, is what creates the dimension of fear to which Foreman refers.¹⁹⁴ It is this construct that, as Patricia Williams notes, rose between the officers of the Street Crime Unit and Diallo "like the smoke from a bad accident, acrid and intangible." Racial profile is "the ghost of the racialized monster, the Suspect profile, Everyone's

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ To forestall accusations of racism, Derbyshire argues that the merit of racial profiling is evident in the responses of black officers. He argues that black officers, much like their white counterparts, respond to black young men with the same high degree of suspicion. This, he notes, is evidence of the universal validity of the claim that blacks are inherently violent and dangerous. The flaw in his logic is that he assumes that African-Americans are immured to racist images. If some African-Americans respond to urban clothing and street styles with the same sense of dread as whites, this attests not to the validity of the essential danger of black youth, but to the popular use of these images in the construction of an undesirable population.

¹⁹⁴ Despite public declarations to the contrary, racial profiling, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, has found increasing support among Americans. For an account of these debates, see Stuart Taylor, Jr., "The Case for Using Racial Profiling in Airports," *National*

Worst Nightmare, the gladiatorial hip-hop gangster brute whose imagined shape trumps flesh-and-blood humanity every time.”¹⁹⁵

Derbyshire's essay is also instructive in its invocation of a national common sense, for such an invocation foregrounds the function of race as the social glue that holds the American national community together. The “we” to whom Derbyshire attributes the common sense includes African-Americans only as negative presences. African-Americans are liminal entities who enable a national play of inclusion and exclusion: it is their exclusion that permits the transformation of a loose grouping of immigrants into an American national community. It is this function of race, Toni Morrison argues, that frightens Americans most about a truly multicolored society. The possibility that race might be eclipsed by a multiculturalism that embraces a continuous proliferating of identities and affinities robs Americans of their most reliable filter in the formation of a subject/citizen. Morrison notes that newly arrived European immigrants go through an accelerated racial education. From the moment of their arrival, they are exposed to “race talk” as the necessary course to membership in the American community. It is through the explicit distancing from African-Americans that they achieve the status of Americans. Hence, Morrison notes,

Whatever the lived experience of immigrants with African Americans — pleasant, beneficial or bruising — the rhetorical experience renders blacks as noncitizens, already outlaws.¹⁹⁶

In the formation of the national community, race becomes the chief vector of disciplining differences. It is the mode through which "warring interests, nationalities and classes can be merged with greatest economy."¹⁹⁷

The reality of race, exemplified by area studies and racial profiling, foregrounds the logical break in Nussbaum's universal civic education; namely, her belief in the inherently transformative potential of education and in its progression toward a stable truth. That is, Nussbaum supposes that education about differences leads to the unearthing of selves that do not adhere to claims of manifest destiny, but that stress that all identities are the chance convergences of historical forces and political will. However, as the above examples suggest, universal civic education is not devoid of a will to power. Area studies and other similar exercises make clear the essential mechanism through which difference is placed in the service of power. Moreover, Nussbaum remains silent about the broader forces that have energized the revival of cosmopolitanism. The

¹⁹⁵ Williams, "Usual Suspects," 10.

¹⁹⁶ Toni Morrison, "On the Back of Blacks," *Time*, Fall 1993, 57. See also, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

pronouncements of Rorty and Hackney, among others, are nervous responses not only to a nation being transformed from within, but are equally a reaction to postcolonial migrancy and its destabilizing forces. Hence, despite her argument that what she is doing is moving away from Rorty's dangerous dichotomy, a division between patriotism and social/civic atomism, what prompts Nussbaum's response is not simply the dangers implicit in the rise of nationalism, but, equally important, if not stated, is the demise of stable national communities. Amy Gutmann is, therefore, correct when she asserts that Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism is "another parochial form of nationalism, this time on a global scale."¹⁹⁸ That is, Nussbaum's patriotic formulation replaces the national community with a global community and in the process smoothes over vastly contentious spaces. It, to rephrase Michael McConnell, borrows from an earlier colonial cosmopolitanism in which the European did not feel at home everywhere in the world, but felt superior everywhere in the world.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Morrison, "On the Back of Blacks," 57.

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, ed., 70.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 82.

Cosmopolitanism and the Language of Colonialism

Cosmopolitanism finds its most powerful ur-expression in the works of Immanuel Kant. Kant engages with the concept through the belief in humanity's "dormant" potential. Inspired by Charles-Irénée Castel, Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Kant investigates the possibility of perpetual peace by accentuating man's relationship to nature. As with Rousseau's imaginative social anthropology of the "state of nature," Kant supposes men in his earliest stages of social development to be in near perfect accord with nature. However, he is far less sanguine about the native's edenic state. Where Rousseau sees peace and an alternative to the evils of class and dynastic despotism, Kant sees stasis. To the isolationism of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Kant offers the civil society as an antidote, as the locus where man fulfills his destiny in nature.

Embracing man's "unsocial sociability," Kant argues that men progress through the watchful management of social antagonisms. Thus, not unlike Hobbes, he accepts discord as an engine that governs progress, insofar as it engenders "law-governed order in society."²⁰⁰ He notes:

. . . thanks be to nature for the incompatibility,
for the distasteful, competitive vanity, for the

²⁰⁰Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 31.

insatiable desire to possess and rule. Without them, all humanity's excellent natural capacities would have lain dormant. Man wills concord; but nature better knows what is good for the species: she wills discord. He wills to live comfortably and pleasantly; but nature wills that he should be plunged from laziness and inactive comfort into work and hardship, so that he will in turn seek by his own cleverness to pull himself up from them.²⁰¹

The commonwealth thus emerges as a guarantor of man's progress. As Kant makes clear in his essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment," the commonwealth functions as a master "who will break his [man's] self-will and force him to obey a universally valid will."²⁰² It thus ensures that intellectual discord takes place in an atmosphere where freedoms are safeguarded.

Commonwealths, however, fall prey to the same "unsocial sociability" responsible for their existence.²⁰³ It is this unsociability, Kant argues, that explains wars. In a rather mechanistic mode, he recognizes war as a productive force, for it constitutes the stimulus that moves commonwealths toward increasingly more inclusive civil societies. If discord among men engenders commonwealths governed by the rule of law, disputes among commonwealths give rise to the formation of an equivalent international body of law. That is, the understanding of the

²⁰¹Ibid., 32.

²⁰²Ibid., 33.

²⁰³Ibid., 34.

devastation that results from international disputes leads to the formation of a "federation of nations" governed by law. Kant notes that the evils of war

forces our species to introduce into the intrinsically healthy mutual opposition among states – an opposition that arises from their freedom – a law of equilibrium and an associated power to enforce it and, consequently, a cosmopolitan state in which the security of nations is publicly acknowledged; this state is not totally lacking in dangers, so mankind's powers may not slumber, but it is also not lacking in a principle of equality in their mutual action and reaction, so they do not destroy one another.²⁰⁴

The teleological progression that informs this philosophical reading of history reaches its final stage with the emergence of a federation of nations. Such a federation makes it possible for nature's "supreme objective": the universal cosmopolitan state.

The federation of nations introduces a condition of recognition that transcends the juridical. In coming together to forestall the possibility of war, the federation introduces extra-judicial norms. These are products of the recognition that, with increased commerce, the restriction of a citizen's rights has repercussions that exceed national borders. This is most salient in the economic arena. The restriction of a citizen's right to trade affects not only the individual, but also encroaches on the networks of commerce that bind

federations. Thus, to maintain the equilibrium that makes federations possible, the rights of individuals, both national and foreigners, must be safeguarded. To this end, Kant introduces the idea of universal *hospitality*, stressing "the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another's country."²⁰⁵ The broadening of the rights of individuals not only to freely trade, but to pursue their religious and intellectual interests unencumbered by restrictions gives rise to the universal cosmopolitan state, a state that guarantees man's realization of his original capacity.

Kant's philosophy of history is of interest not solely for its legacy, reflected in contemporary systems of international law,²⁰⁶ but for the manner in which his cosmopolitanism co-articulates with the politics of nation and time. Kant structures cosmopolitanism as an extension of the evolution of nations-states. The nation is thus converted into a necessary precursor to cosmopolitanism. This shift introduces cosmopolitanism into an historicism that negates the possibility of the 'Other' becoming cosmopolitan. The relationship between history, the nation, and the location of the West as the self-

²⁰⁴Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 118.

²⁰⁶For a discussion of the legacy of Kant's perpetual peace, see Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Project for Perpetual Peace," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce

appointed seat of history-proper introduces the Other into history not as a subject, but as the object of Western tutelage. As Kant remarks about Europe's position in the unfolding of national histories, "one will discover a course of improvement conforming to rules in the constitution of the nations on our continent [Europe] (which will in all likelihood eventually give laws to all others)."²⁰⁷ Thus, Europe is placed not only at the center of history, but it is introduced into an allochronic relationship to the non-West. Europe's position outside of the "time of the Other" forces European nations to inhabit a space and time that is always already cosmopolitan in its relationship to the Other.

This is most powerfully illustrated by Jean-Jacques Annaud's film *Black and White in Color*. Annaud offers an unparalleled tableau of the pitfalls associated with Kantian cosmopolitanism. A comedy of European colonialism filmed in Niofouin, Côte d'Ivoire, *Black and White in Color* introduces viewers to a group of French and German expatriates living in and around Fort Coulais, French West Africa. Among the expatriate community, composed of soldiers, businessmen, priests, and prostitutes, we find Monsieur Hunbert Fresnoy (Jean Carmet), a petty-functionary. Fresnoy, a young and idealistic geographer,

Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 59-76.

emerges as one of the film's central characters. While his fellow Europeans are portrayed as provincial and possessed of the most base of instincts, Annaud depicts Fresnoy as the epitome of the civilized colonial. Not only is he a graduate of the *École Normale Supérieure*, but, as a testament to his civilized status, he goes so far as to believe in the "probable humanity" of Africans, a belief that places him at odds with his less enlightened neighbors. It is around the ensuing tension between Fresnoy's "cosmopolitan" sensibilities and the provincialism of his confrères that much of the film's central theme unfolds.

The film reaches its climax with the news that Europe is at war. In late 1915, Fresnoy, an avid reader, receives a box of books and newspapers from France. He learns from the newspapers that for months France has been at war with Germany. Excited by the news, and seeing an opportunity to escape the oppressive monotony of village life, the expatriates move to demonstrate their patriotism by reaffirming their oath of citizenship, followed by a rousing rendition of the *Marseillaise*, and by declaring war against their German neighbors. After a series of false starts, occasioning numerous comedic opportunities, the local French military official, Sergeant Bousselet, nominates Fresnoy to take over the running of the war. Having formed an

²⁰⁷Kant, 38.

Army of African conscripts, the French settlers lead an attack against a far superior German army. The battlefield is transformed into a *mise-en-abyme*, where whites - sitting in the shadow of Baobab trees drinking wine - watch as Africans die in the name of France and Germany.

Aside from its humorous and often honest look at the reality of Europe's relationship to its colonial subjects, *Black and White in Color* offers a fascinating portrayal of the interaction between the French and the German settlers. Prior to the war, these two communities saw themselves as one and the same. Bonds that transcend commerce, as Leon Réchampot, the local French merchant, reminded Haussmann, a German client, connected them. The fissures between the two national communities emerged only in response to war. Put differently, the war forced them to inhabit their nationalist identities, which they promptly exchanged for a more encompassing self-understanding with the arrival of the British army. With the end of the war, the French and German identities were once again displaced by their shared self-understanding as European colonials.

National identity's function as a second-order narrative is made abundantly clear through the introduction, at the end of the film, of Fresnoy's alter ego, Mr. Kraft. With the surrender of the Germans, Fresnoy is introduced to Kraft, also portrayed by

Jean Carmet, as someone with whom he shares similar concerns. After confessing to their past belief in socialism, Annaud, through a wide angle shot, shows Kraft and Fresnoy walking into the setting sun, hand in hand, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of German and French philology. These last few frames problematize nationalist narratives by widening the focus. Through the overly familiar device of the hero's trek into the setting sun, Annaud links Fresnoy and Kraft in a project that transcends their individual national identities. Europe is made one by the racial Other.

This does not, however, minimize the role of the nation. Rather, it implicates the nation in a broader narrative. As I have noted, Kant's universal history has as its principal actor the nation, the unit through which nature's desire is manifest. This concept is accentuated in Hegel's *The Philosophy of History*. While Kant arrives at nature's will indirectly, preserving nature's ambiguity as a construct, Hegel endows reason in nature with a less amorphous quality. In Hegel, nature's will assumes the form of the *Geist*, an object force through which divine will is manifest in history. Hegel's philosophy of history contains the discontinuities of national histories into a coherent teleology.



Figure 2: A Walk into the sunset.

In its unfolding, the *Geist* moves from the East to the West, locating Europe as the “absolute end of History.”²⁰⁸ The *Geist*’s migration can be mapped in two different registers. In the first, it forms a cartography of power. As alluded to earlier and as I will return to below, Europe emerges from the *Geist*’s capricious migration as the center of world history. As a consequence of the enormous power granted by this movement, Europe saw itself obliged, “in the form of a categorical imperative, as it were, to ‘develop’ (civilize, uplift, educate) the more primitive, barbarous, underdeveloped civilizations.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸Georg W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 103.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 75.

This gave rise to a moral cartography. That is, the *Geist's* maturity in the West propelled the West to assume as its moral *raison d'être* the acquainting of its Other with Reason in History.

To accomplish this, Europe turned to civil society, believing it to be the principal space for the expression of reason. This belief stemmed from the enlightenment notion that the free exercise of reason could be cultivated only within the confines of a civil society, for, as Kant argues, progress is premised on the "freedom to use reason publicly in all matters."²¹⁰ Hegel propels this line of argument further by drawing a direct connection between history and freedom, noting that "the history of the world is nothing but the development of freedom."²¹¹ History, as a record of the progress of freedom, in keeping with the enlightenment's linkage of freedom and civil society, is, therefore, measured principally within the nation-

²¹⁰Ibid. It is important to note the linkage between the public and free exercise of reason and commerce. The entry into civil society as delineated by Hobbes, Locke, and Kant, among others, was out of self-interest, out of the need to ensure that one's body and property would be protected from the desires of others. It is this, Adam Smith argued, that governs the capitalist enterprise. He writes: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages (Smith, 1776: 22). Thus, in maintaining the individual's right to freely exercise reason, the state also establishes the conditions for free enterprise.

²¹¹Ibid., 465.

state. Hence, the transformation of the nation into the *sine qua non* of freedom converts it into the locus proper of history. History becomes not only the record of events within discrete units of time, but, more importantly, it becomes a measure of a people's "evolutionary" process: the map of a people's consciousness.

Such a vision of history establishes a claim to tradition as an indispensable component of a people's consciousness. Having a simultaneous spatial and temporal dimension, tradition serves as the social adhesive that holds communities together and allows them to envision a common destiny. It functions as the living text of a people's historical trajectory - an umbilical cord connecting the present to the past.²¹² Tradition also denotes a state from which a people have evolved. As Nicholas Dirks notes:

We are modern not only because we have achieved this status historically, but because we have developed consciousness of our historical depths and trajectories, as also our historical transcendence of the traditional.²¹³

Thus understood, tradition is the concept that gives meaning to the modern. That is, the modern knows himself as such only in

²¹²For a study of the intersection of identity, history, and heritage, see John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

²¹³Nicholas B. Dirks, "History as a Sign of the Modern," *Public*

contrast to those practices and norms deemed outmoded. Notwithstanding its often contradictory meanings, tradition is a critical component in the articulation of collective identity.

Tradition owes its role in the construction of collective identities to the print media. As Benedict Anderson notes, the nation, as an imagined community, is the product of the interaction of print and capitalist driven socio-economic processes. He writes:

The convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.²¹⁴

The emergence of print media and its use of the vernacular effected a radical change in the perception of time, converting the synchronic nature of religious time into a secular "homogeneous, empty time." The past and future are no longer viewed as coexisting in an "instantaneous present." Rather, they are perceived as discreet instances in the narrative threads of national histories. Print's mediation of the various elements of modernity establishes the condition of possibility for communities of interdependent individuals.

The nexus of print, history, and tradition proved a fertile

Culture 2, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 25.

²¹⁴Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 46.

ground not only for the imagining of national communities, but, of equal import, it made possible the construction of a universal, cosmopolitan history. In anchoring history to a secular homogeneous empty time, Europe brought into its ambit both its national histories and the histories of Others outside its borders, resulting in a systemic philosophy where all is catalogued with respect to specific temporal distances. That is, the differences between the self and the Other are not read as simply the co-existence of different modes of being-in-the-world, but, rather, they are located within a narrative of progress and stasis. Cultural differences, therefore, assume a spatio-temporal character, a distance to be overcome in time. There thus emerges a splitting of history into two different but coexisting times: the time of the self and the time of the Other. This allachronic discourse denies the Other's coevalness, removing him from "the present of the speaking subject,"²¹⁵ while allowing Europe to coexist in a space flattened into an eternal present: a cosmopolitan time.

The ramification of Europe's fashioning of a non-contemporaneous Other is explicated at length in Enrique Dussel's essay, "Eurocentrism and Modernity." Dussel characterizes modernity as a myth that rests on the existence of an Other. He

²¹⁵Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*,

notes:

. . .modernity as such was "born" when Europe was in a position to pose itself against an other, when, in other words, Europe could constitute itself as a unified ego exploring, conquering, colonizing an alterity that gave back its image of itself.²¹⁶

Such a self-definition moves the Other into an Archimedean position with respect to the West's self-identity. Thus, though the Other is denied coevalness, it is his existence that renders the Western project meaningful. The binary nature of this construct establishes the Other as an indispensable category of modernity, entering the West into an inextricable relationship with those residing at the margins of history. This results in one of the central tensions of modernity: its dependence on those whose inevitable extinction it understands as the natural course of progress.²¹⁷

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* offers a biting illustration of this co-articulation of fear and desire in the West's relationship with the Other. This is especially true of Kurtz, the most enlightened of Europeans, a "universal genius."²¹⁸ Kurtz is not only the embodiment of the best Europe has to offer,

143.

²¹⁶Enrique Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures)," *boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (1993): 65.

²¹⁷Sven Lindqvist, *Exterminate All the Brutes*, trans. Joan Tate (New York: Free Press, 1997), 75-108.

²¹⁸Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Penguin Books,

but is Europe. As Conrad reminds us: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz."²¹⁹ In a masterful narrative turn, Conrad presents Kurtz's mythic stature obliquely. We are confronted not by Kurtz's enlightened deeds, but by his unconscionable violence. The steamer's progress down the Congo becomes a window into the gradual unraveling not only of the myth surrounding the individual, Kurtz, but, more importantly, the unraveling of Europe's collective myth. This coming undone of European enlightenment culminates in Marlow's arrival at Kurtz's compound to the horrific display of African heads atop poles circling the compound. The indirection of Conrad's narrative serves its purpose rather well. It offers both a unique commentary on the heinous crimes committed by the Belgians in the Congo, and an uncompromising exposé of the nature of Europe's cultural construction. That is, Europe justified its presence in the Congo not solely through the three Cs of colonialism - Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization - but by its racial and moral superiority. Hence, Europe knows its greatness not in its interaction with itself, but in its dealings, whether real or imagined, with a racial Other. Europe is thus dependent on this Other for its self-definition.²²⁰

1995), 45.

²¹⁹Ibid., 83.

²²⁰Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and*

The centrality of the Other to Europe's self-definition is not without problems. The construction of the Other as inferior places Europe in a problematic position. It forces the Other to simultaneously occupy the "state of nature" and the position of a referent that lends meaning to Europe's self-understanding. The Other is thus at once the object of hate and desire, a tension most keenly reflected in *Heart of Darkness* by Kurtz's "African mistress." In a novella where to look at Africans is held "as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs,"²²¹ we are confronted by a character who manages to escape such a dehumanizing narrative. Marlow describes Kurtz's African mistress thus:

And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a *wild and gorgeous apparition* of a woman. . . She was *savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent*; there was something *ominous and stately* in her deliberate progress. . . Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out of the earth, swept around on the river gathering the steamer in a shadowy embrace.²²²

Conrad's choice of adjectives is illuminating in its mixture of desire and fear. The mistress is at once "wild" and "gorgeous,"

British Rule in India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)., for example, illustrates how the England literary canon is the product Britain's colonial experience.

²²¹Conrad, 105.

²²²*Ibid.*, 99-100. Emphasis added.

“savage” and “superb,” “ominous” and “stately.” This description betrays the possibility of an uncomplicated rejection of the natives’ humanity, as it unveils the complex calibrations of power in the scripting of the “contact zone.”²²³ Europe’s fear contradicts its representation of the native as an object of imperialism. Moreover, Conrad’s description of the African mistress negates European rationality and mastery over nature. In endowing the mistress with magical powers - she is capable of summoning forth the earth’s darker forces, “gathering the steamer in a shadowy embrace” - he reveals not only the mistress’ power, but also the anxiety her power engenders in Nellie’s crew. She is nature at its most primal. And in classical Victorian fashion, she is the portent of disaster, a siren whose songs must be guarded against.²²⁴ Kurtz’s life is thus a cautionary tale;

²²³Pratt, 4.

²²⁴The commingling of desire and fear in the body of the Other, especially the female body, is explored in great detail in Sander L. Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Jr. Henry Louis Gates, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986). Gilman’s is a study of Victorian reaction to female sexuality and its attempts at disciplining female desire through the figure of the Hottentot Venus. Her name alone perfectly illustrates this tension. It is the juxtaposition of desire in the object of the Venus, and of fear/loathing in the image of the Hottentot. The Victorian society’s effort to control its fascination/desire of the Hottentot Venus is equally revealing. For though they reduce her into a clinical specimen to be dissected and analyzed, and later reduced to a museum installation, these efforts, however, failed to quell her power over the Victorian imagination. As Jes Grew, a character in Ishmael Reed’s *Mumbo Jumbo*, (New York: Doubleday, 1972), reminds us, the clinic and the museum are dungeons for the quarantining of “things” which have already become a part of

his death, a testimony to the dangers of getting too close to the Other. This is the struggle in which Europe finds itself enmeshed: the paradoxical need for an Other whose existence grants meaning to modernity, but denies it closure.

Europe's relationship to its Other positions European nations within a shared discursive arena. They cohabit a present that is made meaningful in its relationship to an exterior Other. It is this that makes it possible for Europe to understand itself as cosmopolitan. European nations' participation in modernity's narrative project makes available to them a global space where individual national histories are subsumed under a larger systemic discourse. That is, although assuming different forms within national histories, the *Geist* possesses a cohesive global manifestation. In locating the Other as the exterior point through which cosmopolitanism is made intelligible, the Other is denied membership in cosmopolitanism.

A Haunted Cosmopolitanism

The Sycoraxian disquiet occasioned by late-modern migrancy has destabilized the ontological categories that sustained the colonial cosmopolitan architecture. The spatio-temporal

our psyches. Here, it is important to note an obvious connection between the female body/sexuality and the nation, a connection I will

imaginary that undergirded erstwhile cosmopolitanism ceases to have purchase in the face of postcolonial dislocations. Paradoxically, however, the forces that challenge conventional applications of the term are the products of the same movements that have resulted in calls for a revival of cosmopolitanism. The acceleration of transborder movements, with its accompanying cultural upheavals, has, in the classical application of the concept, qualified the postcolonial Other as a cosmopolitan. That is, the benefits of spatial movement, which was assumed to be the exclusive province of Europeans, have, since the late 1960s, become overwhelmingly the domain of postcolonials. The deterritorializing effect of this movement has resulted in increased attempts at redefining cosmopolitanism to limit the unruly effects of these presences.

Nussbaum concedes to this change by constructing a space for what she terms, after Kwame Anthony Appiah, cosmopolitan patriots or rooted cosmopolitans. She qualifies her call for a cosmopolitan refusal of allegiance to mere forms of government by asserting that in order for the commitment to a moral community of human beings to have purchase it must be anchored in a national tradition. The practice of love necessitated by cosmopolitanism can only flourish, she contends, if it is has as

explore more closely in the next section of this essay.

its first object the immediate community. That is, in a Hegelian sense, the family becomes the first object of cosmopolitan affection. From the family, the love extends outward in ever expanding circles of filiations. What is remarkable about this gesture is the instinct to capture what is essentially a practice of privileged movement. The emergence of the qualified cosmopolitan – patriots and rooted cosmopolitans – suggests a move that territorializes the Other at his very moment of arrival.

This spatial capture of cosmopolitanism is not, however, confined to Westerners alone. Postcolonial migrants have equally sought to resolve the tensions of migrancy by bridging the divide between home and the world through various recodings of cosmopolitanism, as evinced by Vikram Chandra. In 1998, Chandra and a host of young Indian novelists were invited by the British Council in New Delhi to participate in a public reading of their works. As Chandra writes in *The Boston Review*, he was dismayed by the tenor of the audience's question at the end of the reading. For while he had taken pleasure in passages from Ardeshir Vakil's reading of *Beach Boy*, particularly the passages detailing a street vendor's making of bhelpuri, some in the audience read these as illustrations of a nostalgic disconnect defining of "Indo-Anglian" writing. After all, his interlocutors maintained, every Indian knows how bhelpuri is made and does not

need to be reminded of the recipe. Chandra is especially disconcerted by the logic of the argument, a logic that posits an authentic Indian writing - understood as the works of Regional writers whose connection to the day-to-day experience of Indians and whose vernacular vibrancy transcends nostalgia and auto-exoticism - against Indo-Anglian writing. "Indo-Anglian" writing, the audience held, is overburned by Sanskrit and populated by too many cows, monkeys, and elephants. They make a virtue of clichés Western readers associate with India.

Chandra's response to his interlocutors is instructive. Contrary to what one might expect, his reply appeals neither to artistic freedom nor to the possible benefits of an idealized image of home for a diasporic readership. Rather, he sets out to authenticate his membership in "regional writing." He establishes his membership not by invoking an inviolate Indianess, but by asserting his identity as a Bombay suburbanite. He spares no energy in drawing a precise map of home, down to the streets and their intersections. In asserting his membership, he redefines regional writing by refracting it through a cosmopolitan lens. He writes:

My region is a hugely cosmopolitan place. Every person who lives in my region is a cosmopolitan; I travel away from my region every few months to make a living. My neighbors do also. There are the Gujarati diamond merchants who spend three weeks out of every four traveling from Africa to

Belgium to Holland; flight attendants who fly to Beijing; . . .nurses who give care and nurture in Sharjah; and gangsters who shuttle between Bombay and Indonesia and Dubai as part of their everyday trade.²²⁵

Chandra offers postcolonial existential dislocations and messiness as antidotes to authenticity claims implicit in regionalism. To be Indian, he suggest, is to inhabit a space that is inherently hybrid and thus a space that resists discursive authenticity.

However, Chandra curtails what is otherwise a productive deployment of the Sycoraxian by appealing to a rooted cosmopolitan identity. While he argues, inspired by Jorge Luis Borges, that the writer's fundamental responsibility is to the practical needs of his craft and thus ought to transcend calls for legitimacy, Chandra finds it necessary to color his linguistic and spatial movements with reminders of his cultural competency. He notes,

I write in English, and I have forgotten nothing, and I have given up nothing. And I know the tastes and quirks and nuances of my regional audience, of the people who live in the locality Andheri, the colony of Lokhandwalla as well or better than any Bengali poet knows her regional audience.²²⁶

While he maintains that India is the product of an indissoluble

²²⁵ Vikram Chandra, "The Cult of Authenticity: India's Cultural Commissars Worship "Indianness" Instead of Art," *Boston Review*, February/March 2000, 69.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

social and cultural *mélange*, his need to demonstrate a regional cultural competency smoothes over the very differences he wishes to stress. He portrays his locality, "the colony of Lokhandwalla," not as a community whose fluid linguistic and cultural identities are too complex to be captured in essential narratives, but as a location possessed of habits that are transparent enough to be mastered by the writer. He thus fixes "home" into a knowable community and produces himself into the expert interlocutor. This move renders him prey to the limitations of regionalism: he rejects regional claims of authenticity while asserting a fixed position for Andheri. Thus, in finding it necessary to justify authenticity through an allocution that has as its center the immersion in the unique experiences of home, he counteracts the cosmopolitanism he seeks to accentuate.

In a parallel move, Appiah in an essay titled "Cosmopolitan Patriots," challenges the belief that cosmopolitanism necessarily leads to the homogenizing of cultures. He resists the notion that cosmopolitanism is energized by a desire to flatten differences in the name of greater diversity. Rather, he intervenes by noting that there is nothing inherent to cosmopolitanism that limits or denies heterogeneity. He suggests that we approach cosmopolitanism not as an ideology, but as a sentiment. Appealing to a Rawlsian argument, Appiah suggests

that it is possible to subscribe to a moral code that is not limited to the borders of the nation state. That is, while respecting the plurality of national visions and governmental structures, it is possible to call for an international conception of justice.²²⁷ Moreover, he argues, we should recognize that cosmopolitanism rests in one's willingness to respect differences and to accept the nation-state as the principle field of diversity. This allows him to speak of a cosmopolitanism that is rooted in the particular experiences of a people, a rooted or patriotic cosmopolitanism. Appiah writes:

. . .[T]he cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people. The cosmopolitan also imagines that in such a world not everyone will find it best to stay in their natal patria, so that the circulation of people among localities will evolve not only cultural tourism (which the cosmopolitan admits enjoying) but migration, nomadism, diaspora.²²⁸

Although Appiah's conception of cosmopolitanism as a sentiment rather than an ideology is a productive philosophical moment, it is not without limitations. Its chief drawback is that it

²²⁷Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," in *Cosmopolites: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 95.

²²⁸Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring 1997): 618.

eschews any discussion of the networks of power that undergird the cosmopolitan patriot's enunciation. While Appiah does well in preserving the cosmopolitan sentiment that energizes his father's enjoinder for a cosmopolitan engagement with the world, the directive is made vacuous by his refusal to question his father's position as a leading Ghanaian patriot and "nationalist of his class and generation."²²⁹ The failure to confront the structures of power that govern cosmopolitanism risks returning his cosmopolitan sentiment to a statist configuration.

Moreover, what Appiah leaves unexplored are the forces that distinguish "us cosmopolitans" from narrow nationalists. While the nationalist dwells in the characters that define home, in the realities of race that stalls spatial and identity movements, the rooted cosmopolitan engages in a delicate choreography that avoids the "twin pitfalls of parochialism and false universality."²³⁰ Appiah's choreography oscillates between the twin poles of his identity formation; namely, a royal African paternal lineage and a privileged British maternal link. This hybrid and transnational identity allows him to move in ways that most postcolonial migrants cannot. However, his choice of roots is instructive. In his popular scholarship, a scholarship that

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰ Danny Postel, "Is Race Real?: How Does Identity Matter," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 5 2002, A12.

is principally focused on the vagaries of race, his emphasis is almost exclusively on his father's African ancestry. It is to his father, for example, that he attributes his conception of a rooted cosmopolitanism. This conscious marginalization of the maternal root - a root that he refers to only in relation to his mother's work on a collection of Akan proverbs - implies a restricted and unstable relationship to the cosmopolitan assignation. It suggests that the distance between the qualified cosmopolitan and the nationalist is not as great as it seems at first. Both arrest movement in a qualified belonging that is anathema to the cosmopolitanism ascription of universal hospitality.

As evinced by Appiah and Chandra, though postcolonial intellectuals are, of necessity, deeply immersed in the cultures of the West, their status as interlocutors between the West and the non-West forces them to perpetually traffic in the "rear view" of their lived experiences.²³¹ Hence, in evaluating the authorial function that accrues to the rooted cosmopolitan, it is necessary to "remain sensitive to the profound "bifocality" that characterizes" their lives.²³² Bifocality, not unlike hybridity, renders uncertain postcolonial intellectual migrants'

²³¹Gupta and Ferguson: 11.

²³²Ibid. For a further elaboration of the concept of bifocality, see Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of

cosmopolitan membership. For in holding them suspended in the "in-betweenness" of a diasporic present and the eternal return of a home of origin, they are reterritorialized at the very moment of their deterritorialization.

Bifocality bespeaks of a modality of existence that is not present in Western narratives of self-understanding. The West's relationship to its Other is unambiguous. It is, at bottom, an ethnographic relationship. As I noted above, the allochronic nature of the West's interaction with its Other establishes clear discursive boundaries, with the West occupying the space of the ethnographer. While the subject of ethnography is seen as existing within a "knowable community," the ethnographer's position relative to the ethnographic discourse resists such interpretation. That is, the distinction between the ethnographer and the native is a factor of the native's fragmentary control over his world.²³³ The native does not write; he is written. He lacks the epistemic resources to formulate the grand-narratives of anthropology. The West thus locates itself in an arena that, though it traffics in culture, transcends culture. Here Renato Rosaldo's notion of the North American as "cultureless" is

Postmodernism," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991).

²³³John D. Peters, "Seeing Bifocally: Media, Place, Culture," in Akhil Gupta and Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 87.

apropos. Rosaldo notes:

Our mobility, rationality, markets, differentiation and multiplicity of opinions make our culture invisible.²³⁴

The West's self-understanding as existing outside of the domains of explicit cultures denies the possibility of a Western bifocality, insofar as such a modality requires a degree of "fixity" that cosmopolitanism negates.

The Other, by contrast, cannot transcend culture. He exists within a discursive field that, by rendering him intelligible, governs his movements and affinities. Hence, insofar as he inhabits an arena wherein his ontology is always already subsumed in that of the West, he is denied the ontological density proffered to the Hegelian subject. The resulting "lack of ontological resistance" places the Other in a differential position vis-à-vis the West. This is most salient in the West's use of excess labels when speaking about or to the Other. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon eloquently explores this problematic by interrogating the illocutionary force of the utterance: "Look, a Negro!" Such an utterance, he argues, reenacts not only the positional difference between its subject and object, but, more importantly, it inaugurates a new genus. That is, it does not introduce a man, but a "black" man.

²³⁴Ibid., 87.

He writes:

I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance.²³⁵

The label "Negro" is thus moved outside the realm of benign descriptors. It serves to epidermize inferiority, encoding the "idea" in a taxonomic scheme anchored on skin color. The term "Negro," much like the qualifier rooted, performs a carceral function, confining the Other to the "infernal circle" the supplement. In confining the Other to culturalist and racialized spaces, such supplements deny the Other membership in the cosmopolitan universal.

Conclusion

If, as I have argued, the nature of the West's discourse about the Other excludes him from a cosmopolitan identity, we are left to wonder the reasons for cosmopolitanism's continued purchase. We find the answer to this query in Arif Dirlik's essay, "The Postcolonial Aura." Dirlik suggests that to understand the emergence and acceptance of postcolonialism in the First World academy, it is necessary to understand postcolonialism's relationship to global capitalism. Changes in

²³⁵Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 116.

global capitalism have engendered a crisis of meaning, where post Second World War conceptual maps are no longer viable. Global capitalism has given rise to "a new international division of labor," defined by processes of production that are not confined to national borders. Much like production, capital and management do not obey national boundaries, placing the decision making process in the hands of transnational corporations which have little or no national loyalty. The result of this free flow of capital and of the de-centering of labor is the simultaneous amalgamation and fragmentation of the globe. At the same moment that the globe is brought together under the singular umbrella of capitalism, it is fractured through the establishment of zones of commerce and production that render anachronistic the idea of a geographically identifiable Third and First world. Many of the conditions previously thought to be the exclusive province of Third World societies are now found throughout the First World and vice-versa. Postcolonialism thus responds

to a genuine need: the need to overcome a crisis of understanding produced by the inability of old categories to account for the world.²³⁶

It attempts to make sense of an increasingly fragmented world.

Cosmopolitanism functions in a similar fashion. Like

²³⁶Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and

postcolonialism, it sutures the epistemic gaps of a world that seems to collapse under the weight of its increased proximity. Cosmopolitanism allows the West to work through the realities of increased migration and the acceleration of cultural encounters. Its most interesting facet, however, is that - contrary to popular perception - it is not a decentering narrative. It does not substitute limiting nationalist or religious narratives with a broader identity construct. Rather, as exemplified by postcolonial cosmopolitanism, it serves as a mechanism through which the West recenters itself. It authorizes the West's reinsertion in a narrative of exclusion. This, as the next chapter argues, explains the contradictory impulse that simultaneously sustains calls for a grater cosmopolitan presence amid the proliferation of surveillance practices.

CHAPTER 4
EBOLA TAKES TO THE ROAD:
MOBILIZING VIRUSES IN DEFENSE OF THE NATION-STATE

Medical police, like all police science, is an art of defense.²³⁷

A dark skin was seen not only as a badge of shame for its wearer. Now we were evil incarnate, the mask of long agony and violent death.²³⁸

Colette Matshimoseka arrived at Toronto's Pearson International Airport on the cold morning of February 3, 2001. After a seemingly interminable flight that took her from Kinshasa to Addis Ababa, Rome, Newark, and Toronto, she drove to Hamilton, where she stayed with friends before moving on to Montreal to attend a conference. During her first night in Hamilton, Matshimoseka fell ill: "She had a headache, no appetite, she was confused."²³⁹ The next morning, Sunday, February 4th, she was taken by ambulance to Henderson General Hospital in Hamilton. The emergency room physicians, suspecting she was suffering from a "low grade malaria," admitted her. Their differential diagnosis took a sinister, if not predictable, turn, "especially

²³⁷Johann Peter Frank, *A System of Complete Medical Police: Selections from Johann Peter Frank* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 12.

²³⁸John Edgar Wideman, *Fever: Twelve Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1990).

²³⁹Mary Vallis, "Woman with Mysterious Illness on Life-Support,"

considering where she [Colette Matshimoseka] came from,"²⁴⁰ when the Hospital's consulting infectious disease specialist, Dr. Douglas MacPherson, expanded the differential to include Ebola and a host of other hemorrhagic fevers - Lassa, Marburg, and Crimean-Congo.²⁴¹ Dr. MacPherson's differential set in motion a network of public health and media machines that would transform Matshimoseka into North America's "first case of Ebola."²⁴²

Matshimoseka's hospitalization met with fevered panic. Following Dr. MacPherson's advice, she was placed under strict quarantine while samples of her blood were sent to the Canadian Center for Human and Animal Research in Winnipeg and to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta for testing. In accordance with stringent infection control surveillance protocols, nurses and physicians were required to "wear full protective gear in her presence"²⁴³ and monitor temperature and other vitals for signs of infection. While, given her initial symptoms, the necessity of

National Post, February 9 2001.

²⁴⁰Anne Marie Owens, "Deadly Virus Not Ruled out, Public Told Not to Panic," *National Post*, February 7 2001.

²⁴¹These are also referred to as Biosafety level-4 viruses. See Joseph B. McCormick and Susan Fisher-Hoch, *Level 4: Virus Hunters of the C.D.C.* (New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1999).

²⁴²Kem Kilpatrick, "Canada's Ebola Scare over but Questions Just Beginning," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164, no. 7 (2001): 1031. Although the West is the space where the fear of the virus is most acutely demonstrated, it has not spared the South. In January 2001, Saudi Arabia "banned all Ugandan Muslim pilgrims from attending the annual Hajj pilgrimage." Frank Gardner, "Hajj Pilgrims Barred in Ebola Scare," *BBC News*, 23 January 2001.

²⁴³Vallis.

those precautions is debatable, they, nevertheless, conform to accepted institutional responses to infectious diseases.

What stands out about Matshimoseka's hospitalization, however, are the non-institutional responses it engendered. The public and private utterances of the Hospital's staff are especially instructive as they betray a level of anxiety that reveals much about Ebola's metaphorical force in the West's national imaginary. Reactions ranged from Dr. MacPherson's confident assertion that the general population was at minimal risk for contracting Ebola to those of nurses and lab workers who kept their "children home from school and daycare for fear of passing any virus to children."²⁴⁴ A nurse, scheduled to wed days after Matshimoseka's hospitalization, declared that she "was unsure if she should leave the country for her honeymoon while she waits through the incubation period."²⁴⁵ Similarly, Mario Posteraro, president of the local ambulance workers' union, remarked that "a number of paramedics . . . are actually questioning their choice of profession." He adds: "We work in unpredictable, unsanitary conditions and put ourselves at great risk because the deadly virus [Ebola] may be hidden behind some

²⁴⁴Adrian Humphreys, "Mystery Illness: Health Canada Rules out Ebola," *National Post*, February 8 2001.

²⁴⁵Ibid.

other symptomology.”²⁴⁶ Plumbers at Henderson Hospital echoed the ambulance workers concerns. Richard Marcotte, a plumber who has worked for the Hospital for 30 years, noted: “If any body fluids are going down the drain, we have to take precautions.”²⁴⁷ Debbie Mattina, a representative of the Hospital’s lab workers, summarized the Hospital staff’s feeling when she commented: “They’re not sure if they should kiss their husbands or hug their children. These are people whose lives have been interrupted.”²⁴⁸

I quote these responses not to discount the risks of contagion or to belittle the Hospital workers’ and the community’s fears. Hemorrhagic viruses have effected great human costs in societies throughout central Africa and Latin America. Nevertheless, of pathogens that “threaten” the globe, Ebola is, at best, a minor contributor. As Michael Fumento reminded readers of the *National Post*: “We hardly need be reminded of the continent’s [Africa] AIDS problem. But additionally each year Sub-Saharan Africa suffers half a million deaths from tuberculosis, and almost 700,000 from malaria. Diarrhea - - often a laughing matter in First World countries - - kills about 900,000.”²⁴⁹ Although morbidity and mortality statistics cannot

²⁴⁶Vallis.

²⁴⁷Humphreys.

²⁴⁸Ibid.

²⁴⁹Michael Fumento, “Ebola Fever Sweeps the West,” *National Post*, January 31 2001.

adequately account for the suffering caused by Ebola, Lassa, and other hemorrhagic viruses, they do, however, highlight the discordance between the number of lives affected by these viruses, less than 500 deaths since 1995, and the fear they engender.

To understand the fear these viruses inspire in the West, we must look beyond medical and public health discourse. Popular culture's preoccupation with Ebola - unlike malaria, for example - rests not in its infectivity, though this is a recurring concern, but in the horror associated with the illness' end-stage.²⁵⁰ Richard Preston equates this stage with "the secret detonation of an atomic bomb,"²⁵¹ a "terminal meltdown."²⁵² After death a "sort of shock-related meltdown occurs . . .the corpse's connective tissue, skin, and organs . . .begin to liquefy."²⁵³ These descriptions flag the body's loss of physical and metaphorical containment. They mark Ebola's caustic effect on the body as a symbolic frontier between the self and the Other. The acute hemorrhage that comprises the end-stage of Ebola hemorrhagic fever thus resonates not only with medical discourse and social taboos about blood contagion, a discursive thread made

²⁵⁰See McCormick and Fisher-Hoch.

²⁵¹Richard Preston, *The Hot Zone* (New York: Random House, 1994), 68-69.

²⁵²*Ibid.*, 272.

²⁵³*Ibid.*, 75.

acutely resonant by the AIDS pandemic, but also finds its socio-political complement in anxieties about the body politic's vulnerability to increased cross-border flows of populations. This angst transforms Ebola into the subject of a complex matrix of enactments about the nature of difference and the possibility of disciplining the flows of bodies.

Colette Matshimoseka's story highlights the homology between Ebola's disruption of the integrity of the body and the anxiety about the nation-state's decreased viability as a stable cultural and linguistic site. Matshimoseka's lab results were returned less than a week after her hospitalization. The results were greeted by newspaper headlines asking Canadians to "breathe easy" for it was "not quite the plague."²⁵⁴ However, while Canadians breathed easy, Matshimoseka's problems were far from over. For while she no longer was the unwitting agent of "an international health scare,"²⁵⁵ articles were beginning to appear in newspapers throughout Canada suggesting that "she is under investigation by immigration officials, who say she may be linked to diamond smuggling."²⁵⁶ Statements by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that it had met with immigration officials and had found

²⁵⁴"Not Quite the Plague," *National Post*, February 9, 2001.

²⁵⁵ "Hospital on Hook for Ebola Scare Medical Bill," *National Post*, March 13, 2001.

²⁵⁶Heather Sokoloff, "Congo Woman in Ebola Scare Leaves the Hospital," *National Post*, March 5 2001.

“no reason to go any further” with the investigation did not put an end to Matshimoseka’s plight.²⁵⁷ She soon found herself at the center of a debate about the burden immigrants posed on Canada’s health system. Newspapers reported that the Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation was likely “stuck with more than \$60,000 in medical bills” incurred in caring for her.²⁵⁸ Matshimoseka became the lightning-rod for appeals to reform the health and immigration system by requiring “the federal government to cover the costs of [caring for] visitors it allows into the country.”²⁵⁹ Matshimoseka is the focal point in these narratives’ shifting angles. Whether as carrier of Ebola, as courier of illegal diamonds, or as an emblem of the immigrant’s burden on Canada’s limited resources, she is alien, undesirable, and threatening.

Matshimoseka’s story exposes the discursive pathways linking the rising interest in “superbugs” with the “meta-machines” that transform the migrant into a potential carrier and thus a threat to the health of the West’s body politic. Much has been said about the recent proliferation of contagion narratives. These approach the genre as a by-product of AIDS “blood culture,” of an internal anxiety about the disruptive qualities of the

²⁵⁷“Police Will Not Probe Congolese Woman,” *The Toronto Star*, 6 March 2001.

²⁵⁸Joanna Fretich, “Ebola Scare Costly for Hospital,” *The Toronto Star*, March 13 2001.

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*

epidemic. While this is an instructive take, in this chapter I argue that the “community of discourse” engendered by the fear of viral pandemics is a productive terrain for an analysis of the mechanisms by which nation-states code bodies and arrest their flow, thus safeguarding the nation-state’s role as an authoring locus of qualified life.²⁶⁰ Put differently, I approach the signifiers of the 1980s “blood culture,” AIDS and Ebola, as social signs that offer a symptomatology of our present disquiet about globalization and the end of the supremacy of nation-states. I demonstrate how present attempts at addressing the proliferation of encounters, brought about most significantly by the end of the colonial empires, offer a glimpse into the conditions governing the phenomenon of globalization and the resistances they engender.

*Of Mallon, McCarthy, and Matshimoseka: Constructing the
Social Being*

In a September 2000 interview on National Public Radio, *Newsday* health and science journalist, Laurie Garrett, describes her fear and excitement at the CIA’s invitation to brief its agents on the dangers of emergent viruses to the United States’ national security. She recounts, “as a child of the sixties,”

²⁶⁰Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereignty, Power and Bare Life*

being overcome by a wave of panic when asked for her social security number as she drove past the security gates of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia. Her journey to Langley, to the inner sanctum of American security discourse, began with her coverage of the 1995 Ebola outbreak in Kikwit, Zaire, for which she was awarded the 1996 Pulitzer prize. Garrett's work has moved, in rapid succession, from explanatory, scientific journalism to policy and advocacy, making her the leading spokesperson on the dangers of emergent diseases.

Garrett's writings trace her ascent to the role of public health policy advisor and, more importantly, the renewed acceptance of the public health imperative in national security. Shortly before winning the Pulitzer, Garrett published a volume titled *The Coming Plague: Newly Emergent Diseases in a World Out of Balance*.²⁶¹ The volume, with a millenarian sensibility, exhaustively catalogues global outbreaks of new and old illnesses, scripting a frightening picture of a world on the verge of disaster. However, as she acknowledges in an NPR interview with Noah Adams, *The Coming Plague* left her, along with so many of her readers, frustrated by public health's failure to

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15.

²⁶¹Laurie Garrett, *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World out of Balance* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

prevent disease outbreaks.²⁶² Thus motivated, she set out to explore the shortcomings of “global public health” infrastructures in a sequel titled *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of the Global Public Health*.²⁶³

Betrayal of Trust was an instant success, finding a receptive readership in quarters as diverse as the White House and the CDC.²⁶⁴ It owes its critical reception as much to Garrett’s choice of genre - a reenactment of the eschatological genre popular in the late 1990s - as to her diagnosis of public health’s collapse. Garrett premises her etiology on two key events. The first, which she traces to the late 1800s, was the consequence of a paradigm shift in the conception of disease. Prior to the 1860s, public health practitioners understood epidemics through a mix of concepts ranging from individual constitution to the miasma theory. While the former correlated an individual’s susceptibility to illnesses to his constitution - following a Protestant conception of health as a marker of both genetic predisposition and moral character - the miasma theory explained illnesses as deriving from *malaria*, a condition

²⁶²www.npr.org/ramfiles/atc/20000825.act.06.ram

²⁶³Laurie Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 2.

²⁶⁴Soon after the publication of *Betrayal of Trust*, Laurie Garrett received a letter from President Bill Clinton noting that “I [Clinton] have tried to help on this, but it’s obvious we need to do more - much more.” For the note’s full text see, ww.lauriegarrett.com/index_betrayal.html.

prevalent in overly congested urban centers.

These explanations were unmoored when, in 1865, Louis Pasteur published his paper on the germ theory. A chemist by training, Pasteur's discovery that yeast, the agent responsible for the fermentation of beer, could be killed if subjected to high temperatures, proving that "the theory of spontaneous generation is chimerical."²⁶⁵ Moreover, applying his theory to surgery, Pasteur postulated that "septicemia depends upon the presence and growth of a microscopic organism."²⁶⁶ The latter assertion sparked the interest of the British surgeon, Sir Joseph Lister, who began applying the tenets of germ theory to his surgical practice and found that wounds and surgical fields could be sterilized by applying carbolic acid, a chemical agent "capable of destroying the life of the floating particles."²⁶⁷ These discoveries ushered in the era of "germ theory" in public health. "The gospel of germs"²⁶⁸ occasioned profound social changes. It affected the construction of buildings and the manner in which people lived in urban centers - changing the hygiene practices of physicians and housewives alike - contributing to a

²⁶⁵Louis Pasteur, "The Germ Theory and Its Applications to Medicine and Surgery," in *Harvard Classics*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: Collier & Son, 1909).

²⁶⁶*Ibid.*

²⁶⁷Joseph Lister, "On the Antiseptic Principle of the Practice of Surgery," in *Harvard Classics*, ed. Charles W. Eliot (New York: Collier & Son, 1909).

²⁶⁸Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe*

significant decline in mortality statistics. Its success in containing and, as in the case of smallpox, eradicating the sources of epidemics rendered public health a less immediate public concern.

Late twentieth century medical advances further exacerbated public health's declining significance. Writing in 1991, Nancy Tomes noted:

Only fifty years ago, the most reliable weapons in the medical armamentarium were still preventive rather than curative. The medicine cabinet then held a few impressive drugs, such as insulin for diabetes and digitalis for heart disease, but contained no "magic bullets" able to cure the most common infectious diseases.²⁶⁹

The unprecedented mortality and morbidity experienced by U.S. soldiers fighting in tropical theaters during the Second World War forced the U.S. and its allies to undertake a vigorous campaign to refine existing drugs and discover new ones. These efforts introduced new antibiotics that proved effective in combating a myriad of illnesses. WWII medical research effected a post-1940s therapeutic revolution that shifted medical discourse from prevention and control to cure, thereby changing the governmental attributes of medical power. The new scientist-physician - armed with germ theory and antibiotics - became a

in American Life (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

²⁶⁹Nancy Tomes, "Oral History in the History of Medicine," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 2 (1991): 607.

potent force, displacing the power formerly held by public health practitioners, who could neither secure the public's attention nor garner government support.

Western divestiture in public health, Garrett contends, coincides with a world made "completely vulnerable" by the transnationalization of production and the post-Cold War ideological fractures.²⁷⁰ Garrett's understanding of the world's vulnerability is consonant with the triumphalist neo-liberal "revolution." Late-modern decentralization of production and the concomitant acceleration of trans-border flows of goods and people increase the risks of cross-border movement of biological agents, challenging the post WWII optimism that "microbes were biologically stationary targets and that disease could be geographically sequestered."²⁷¹ Lending a geopolitical urgency to her analysis, she adds that "diseases can no longer be expected to remain in their countries or regions of origin," for in globalization "all paths ultimately lead these people [those who most aggressively seek a better life] - and the microbes they may carry - to the United States, Canada, and Western Europe."²⁷²

The risks associated with population movement, however,

²⁷⁰See Laurie Garrett, "The Return of Infectious Disease," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 1 (1996), Laurie Garrett, "The Nightmare of Bioterrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 1 (2000).

²⁷¹Garrett, "The Return of Infectious Disease," 66.

²⁷²*Ibid.*: 70.

exceed the dangers of contagion. By accelerating cultural and political encounters, late modern population flows threaten the nation-state's political viability by heightening the likelihood of conflicts. Garrett's reading echoes the xenophobic anxieties displayed in Samuel Huntington's diagnosis of present conflicts in "The Clash of Civilizations?" Huntington's essay questions realist international relations' ability to satisfactorily account for contemporary conflicts. While he preserves, if attenuated, the agency of nation-states, he contends that in the "new world" order

civilization-consciousness is increasing; conflict between civilizations will supplant ideological and other forms of conflict as the dominant global form of conflict; international relations, historically a game played out within Western civilization, will increasingly be de-Westernized and become a game in which non-Western civilizations are actors and not simply objects. .

²⁷³

Although Huntington displaces realism with a civilizational heuristic, he leaves unaltered realist theory's rationalist core. It is the unit and not the mode of analysis that changes. In his civilizational frame, "kin-country syndrome" replaces "political ideology and traditional balance of power considerations as the basis for cooperation and coalitions."²⁷⁴ The resulting

²⁷³Samuel P. Huntington and others, *The Clash of Civilizations?: The Debate* (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1996), 24.

²⁷⁴Ibid., 12-13.

civilizational construct preserves the world's intelligibility, if not predictability, by anchoring conflicts and tensions in immutable, ontological differences. While Garrett's and Huntington's models share a culturalist focus, Garrett is less sanguine about the intelligibility of modern conflict. Inasmuch as she eschews civilizational categories, her world does not succumb to civilization's centripetal force, but fragments in a plurality of cultures and voices that render conflict not only present but unpredictable.

Garrett's fractious political matrix lends itself to a heightened sense of insecurity. For unlike the Cold War nuclear détente, which assumed equilibrium in the destructive powers of states, a gross power asymmetry defines the present political landscape. The proliferation of political agents and enmities, though not eclipsing conventional warfare, gives rise to novel, "asymmetric warfare."²⁷⁵ Non-state agents vying for power no longer seek competitive advantage by adopting nuclear weapons, but use more affordable and ready-at-hand technologies. Among these, biotechnology surfaces as the most powerful. Garrett notes:

biology in the last decades has been what physics was in the 1940s and 1950s: a field of exponential discovery. What seemed impossible in 1980 was

²⁷⁵Steven M. Block, "The Growing Threat of Biological Weapons," *American Scientist* 89, no. 1 (2001): 28.

accomplished by 1990 and, by 2000, had become ho-hum fodder for high school biology classes.²⁷⁶

She adds that it is now possible for "enough anthrax spores to kill five or six million people [to] be loaded into a taxi and pumped out its tailpipe as it meander[s] through Manhattan."²⁷⁷ The easy conversion of pathogens into potent biological weapons makes them the "poor man's atom bomb."²⁷⁸ Moreover, the "low probability, high consequence" of biological weapons renders them attractive as tactical weapons, as witnessed by the September 1984 mass poisoning in The Dalles, Oregon by followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who, in a bid to take over the town council, contaminated salad bars with salmonella bacteria to keep the town's voters from the polls.²⁷⁹ The Rajneesh's poisoning in Oregon and Aum Shinrikyo's sarin nerve gas attack in Tokyo subway stations bespeak, Garrett argues, a need to reconceive our understanding of security.²⁸⁰ The proliferation of biotechnology assures that the West, particularly the United States, will be the target of biological terrorism. Put more starkly by Steven Block, "the terrorist threat is very real, and it's about to get

²⁷⁶Garrett, "The Nightmare of Bioterrorism," 76.

²⁷⁷Garrett, "The Return of Infectious Disease," 76.

²⁷⁸Block: 32.

²⁷⁹ For a detailed account of the Rajneesh poisonings, see Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad, *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

²⁸⁰"From Sarin in to Software: A doomsday cult's secret weapon: high tech," *Newsweek*, March 13, 2000 vol. 135 no. 11, 40.

worse."²⁸¹ The threats of "asymmetric warfare" blur the borders between "natural microbial events and those that [are] man-made."²⁸²

The resulting "coming plague" scenario effects a profound anxiety about our collective capacity to control the pathogens responsible for tuberculosis and similar diseases, and elevates our fears about the technology responsible for the post-1940s exuberance that culminated in the 1978 signing of the United Nation's Declaration of Alma Ata, "Health for All, 2000."²⁸³ Garrett accords this biological uncertainty with a need to deemphasize Cold War conceptions of security, predicated upon exclusive notions of state agency. Most significant, she contends, the ideas about security that have governed policymaking in past decades should be retooled to place biological threats at the center of national security discussions. The security discourse, therefore, ought to shed its military-cum-ideological accent and adopt a public health, biological surveillance emphasis.

This analysis is problematic. Garrett, in her non-reflexive embrace of normative notions of risk, fails to account for the nation-state's use of public health to enact a recuperative

²⁸¹Block: 28.

²⁸²Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 45.

²⁸³Garrett, "The Return of Infectious Disease," 66.

discourse. To ground her assertions about the risks associated with the collapse of public health, Garrett cites the 1994 outbreak of pneumonic plague in Surat, India. In a chapter instructively titled "Filth and Decay," she writes that in 1987, 28 years after the last recorded incident of plague, the Indian government abandoned its public health surveillance of *Yersinia pestis* - the vector of bubonic and pneumonic plagues.²⁸⁴ The closing of the program would have dire consequences, when, in October 1994, physicians in Surat, Gujarat state, began reporting cases of pneumonic plague. In the weeks prior to the Surat outbreak, peasants returning to Beed District in Maharashtra state - a few hundred kilometers East of Surat - in the aftermath of the 1993 Latur earthquake fell ill from bubonic plague. Seeking treatment and refuge, many migrated to Surat, where the bacterium they carried thrived in the City's densely populated and squalid streets.²⁸⁵

Surat's lack of adequate public health infrastructure proved disastrous. A prosperous industrial city in the West, the City is home to approximately 2.2 million inhabitants, 40 percent

²⁸⁴ Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 15-49.

²⁸⁵ Praful Bidwai, "Plague Warning," *The Nation*, October 3 1994. This is by no means a universally accepted casual model for the Surat outbreak. Researchers have suggested that the cause for Surat's outbreak might be found in the human contact with plague-infested dead and dying animals brought to the city by the monsoon floods. See, for example, I. J. Catanach, "The 'Globalization' of Disease? India and the

of whom are imported laborers working in clothing mills and diamond-polishing and gold industries. While the City is home to some of India's wealthiest merchants, its laborers live in slums. In the slums, where the condition was made worse by the monsoon flooding of the river Tapti, the bubonic plague converted into pneumonic plague, a more virulent and contagious variant. Faced with the disease's "explosive spread," the municipal authorities declared Surat "plague threatened" within days of the first recorded cases.²⁸⁶ The declaration sent a wave of panic through the population, half a million of which fled the City. In the exodus were "workers and hospital staff, including physicians," further jeopardizing the City's imperiled medical infrastructure.²⁸⁷

While the moneyed sought the first means of transportation out of the City and the poor hunted rats, India's federal bureaucracy was silent. For days, "the government strenuously denied any outbreak of plague."²⁸⁸ The government's reticence was, in part, a reaction to earlier incidents of melioidosis in Pune, Maharashtra state. Not wanting to exacerbate the citizenry's fears by mistaking melioidosis, a bacterial infection, with

Plague," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2001): 147.

²⁸⁶ D. T. Dennis, "Plague in India: Lessons for Public Health Everywhere," *British Medical Journal* 309, no. 6959 (1994).

²⁸⁷ Sanjay Kumar, "Plague in India," *The Lancet* 344, no. 8927 (1994): 941.

²⁸⁸ Bidwai, 480.

pneumonic plague, India's National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) was slow in conducting the assays.²⁸⁹ There were, however, more instrumental reasons for the government's reticence and equivocation. First, keenly aware of its dependence on global financial networks, India feared that acknowledging Surat's outbreak would adversely impact its markets. As Bidwai has noted, Narasimha Rao's cabinet "took more than ten days to discuss the Surat outbreak after it occurred, and even then it focused not so much on containing the disease as on reassuring the world business community."²⁹⁰ The government's fear proved warranted when, weeks into the outbreak, the Bombay stock market fell some 213 points, 5% of its total value. Second, the region's volatile political atmosphere further complicated matters. Conterminous with the outbreaks were popular outcries denouncing countries from the United States to Bangladesh for their purported involvement in the plague. Newspaper editorials and political pundits contended that the outbreaks in Beed and Surat were the result of genetically engineered bacterium released on the unsuspecting population by American and/or former Soviet scientists. Still others maintained that the outbreaks were rumors promulgated by Pakistan and Bangladesh to undermine

²⁸⁹ T. Jacobson John, "Final Thoughts on India's 1994 Plague Outbreak," *The Lancet* 346, no. 8977 (1995): 765.

²⁹⁰ Bidwai, 481.

India's national security.²⁹¹ While the government busied itself sifting through these narratives, the plague raged in Surat, killing 56 people and infecting some 453 others.²⁹²

The international community's responses were similarly wanting. Countries around the globe responded with "unthinking panic." The United States, for example, went into a heightened state of alert. Rudy Giuliani, New York City's mayor, a City with an average of 31 daily flights from India, asked City officials to bar all flights originating from India. When convinced that the measure was ill advised, the City adopted the C.D.C.'s recommendations and mobilized INS agents, physicians, and flight crews into a network of "passive surveillance." They were charged with identifying and quarantining persons suffering from coughs, chills, and fever as potential carriers of plague. The United States' reactions, however, pale in comparison to those of South Asian and Gulf states. Countries in the Gulf responded by boycotting "such outrageously misnamed plague-carrying items as Indian postage stamps, oranges, Madras bolts of silk, and Bangalore computer chips."²⁹³ Others, like Bangladesh, one of India's closest neighbors, closed their borders to Indian

²⁹¹ Some commentators saw the plague as a divine sign of all that was amiss with India. See, for example, Francois Gautier, "The Horror That Is Bharat," *The Indian Express*, September 11 2000.

²⁹² Kumar: 941.

²⁹³ Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 48.

citizens, prompting a commentator to remark, "Indian rats are unlikely to observe such restrictions."²⁹⁴

In the wake of the plague, India became a "global pariah." And as Praful Bidwai asserts, "the Indian elite discovers for the first time what untouchability is."²⁹⁵ These articulations of distance as national forms of individuation are overlooked by Garrett's focus on the international communities' ineffectual responses to the outbreak as evidence of a public health system in crisis. Bangladeshi and American responses to Surat's outbreak are neither mere illustrations of the "inanity" of international reactions nor simple reminders of our collective vulnerability to diseases. They enact a discourse of surveillance that operates within a thick symbolic space. Bangladesh's border closing, for example, exceeds the public health-cum-medical discourse. Its supplementarity unmask the "absence of presence" in nationalist discourse.²⁹⁶ It is a gesture of self-creation, of self-articulation in the face of contested regional and global politics. That is, the international community's responses to the outbreak betray a reflex to secure borders in a world of vanishing boundaries. Thus, as Priscilla Wald notes:

²⁹⁴ Editorial, "Plague in India: Time to Forget the Symptoms and Tackle the Disease," *The Lancet* 344, no. 8929 (1994).

²⁹⁵ Bidwai, 481.

²⁹⁶ Christine Howells, *Derrida: Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 41.

If epidemiologists map the imagined of the global village, charting diseases as they cross national borders, the depiction, as much as the management, of those diseases reinforces the boundaries.²⁹⁷

By overlooking epidemiology's boundary creating impulse, Garrett renders her analysis silent on the bio-politics of public health. This is evinced by Garrett's canonical history of American public health. In her bio-political drama, turn of the 20th century New York City is the principal character. The City's billing is an extension of its history as the primary port of entry for millions of European immigrants. Garrett writes:

From its inception New Amsterdam, later New York City, was a global trading post, its very survival depended upon a multilingual, diverse population. While other colonial outposts also shipped goods, New York surpassed colonial competition by opening its harbor to ships and immigrants from all over the world. And in so doing, New York also opened itself up to the world's diseases.²⁹⁸

Although New York City stages an intersection between urbanization, migration, and health, Garrett restricts her focus to the association between the rise of public health and the ascent of a sizeable urban middle class. She contends that in the absence of an established middle class "the rich simply lived separate and unequal lives . . . raising their families through

²⁹⁷Priscilla Wald, "Imagined Immunities," in *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*, ed. Jodi Dean (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 208.

²⁹⁸Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 2.

private systems of health, education, and cultural training.”²⁹⁹ The geographical and material distance between the rich and the poor lessened the drive for public health infrastructures. The upper class understood the gulf as insurance against the putative source of epidemics: poverty and its attendant social and moral turpitude. Thus, Garrett maintains, public health discourse, whether as sanitary or germ theory, would not find wide acceptance until the post-World War I rise of an urban middle class - a class that “supported public education, recognized and abhorred corruption, and, as home owners, had an investment in their cities.”³⁰⁰

While the middle class was decisive in popularizing public health as discourse and movement, its adherence to the “gospel of germs” transcended concepts of sanitation and medical contagion. Writing about the “private side” of public health, Nancy Tomes cautions against social historians’ dismissal of public health’s impact on mortality and morbidity for accounts that hold “the expressed concern about disease as a rationalization for some other, more genuine, objective such as reinforcing gender roles, class differences, or ethnic prejudices.”³⁰¹ The affluent

²⁹⁹Ibid., 284.

³⁰⁰Ibid.

³⁰¹ Nancy Tomes, “The Private Side of Public Health: Sanitary Science, Domestic Hygiene, and the Germ Theory, 1870-1900,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 64, no. 4 (1990): 512. See also Richard L. Bushman and Claudia L. Bushman, “The Early History of Cleanliness in

housewife's anxiety about cleanliness and germs, Tomes writes, was born not simply of a need to preserve their social standing, but from a concern for the extraordinary mortality rates of diseases such as dysentery. She contends that the population boom at the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the success of the middle class' vigilance against the "lower life." Although Tomes' remarks are on point, it is, nevertheless, instructive to heed Norbert Elias' assertion that changes in personal hygiene do "not come from rational understanding of the causes of illness, but . . . from changes in the way people live together, in the structure of society."³⁰²

Much insight can, therefore, be gained by refracting the middle class' role in the history of public health through a spatial prism. That is, while the stark and symbolic distance between the upper and lower classes depended on gross forms of violence and proved relatively easy to sustain, the rise of an urban middle class demanded a more complex mode of class surveillance.³⁰³ Public health's referents - contagion and cleanliness - were active tropes in the new technology of governmentality. In the industrial cities of the late 1800s,

America," *Journal of American History* 74 (1988).

³⁰² Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 159.

³⁰³ For a discussion of how the "economy of social goods" is employed in the maintenance of social hierarchies, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge,

teeming with immigrant blue-collar workers, these tropes functioned not simply as scaffolds of a preventive science, but “held the potential of deepening every social divide.”³⁰⁴ Put differently, public health discourse naturalized class hierarchies by instilling in the urban proletariat the belief that the discipline to fight dirt and grime was a reflection of moral rectitude and the cornerstone of middle class propriety. As Richard and Claudia Bushman note, “cleanliness had social power because it was a moral ideal and thus a standard of judgment. Cleanliness values bore on all who wished to better their lives or felt the sting of invidious class comparisons.”³⁰⁵ Public health discourse thus simultaneously substantiated America’s democratic mythos - the belief that class ascendancy was attainable through the assimilation of certain prescribed social values - and fueled deep social divides. It transformed Garrett’s New York City from an immunologically coherent metonym for the nation into a national *mise-en-scène* of encounter, accelerating America’s elemental political struggles.³⁰⁶

The violence of public health’s bio-political agency is

Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

³⁰⁴ Bushman and Bushman: 1230.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 1228.

³⁰⁶ For a revealing study of New York City’s role in American political and racial discourse, see Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1995). See also C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, Castaways: The Story of Hermann Melville and the World We Live In* (Dartmouth: University Press of New

most powerfully illustrated by Mary Mallon's biography. Mallon, a young Irish immigrant cook, led, like countless immigrant women living in New York, a socially invisible life. In 1907, her life, and by extension America's cultural lexicon, would be forever changed by a visit from George Soper. Soper, a sanitary engineer and adherent of the germ theory, had been hired by the Thompsons, a wealthy New York City family, to investigate an outbreak of typhoid at their summer rental home in Oyster Bay, Long Island.³⁰⁷ Armed with the theory of healthy carriers of typhoid, he became convinced that Mallon, who had been employed by the Thompsons at Oyster Bay, was the crucial link in the outbreak. However, when he confronted her at her employer's Park Avenue residence, Mallon was far from hospitable to Soper's accusation that she was to blame for the outbreaks. Soper described Mallon's response thus: "It did not take Mary long to react to this suggestion. She seized a carving fork and advanced in my direction. I passed rapidly down the long narrow hall, through the tall iron gate, . . . and so to the sidewalk. I felt rather lucky to escape."³⁰⁸ Undaunted, he visited her at her residence and unsuccessfully attempted to persuade her to volunteer blood, urine, and stool specimens. Convinced of her

England, 2001).

³⁰⁷Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public's Health* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 14.

³⁰⁸ George Soper quoted in *Ibid.*, 43.

guilt, Soper appealed to Dr. Hermann Biggs at the New York City Health Department.

In Biggs, Soper found an attentive audience. A highly driven and astute politician, Biggs believed that public health, when granted autonomous "legislative, judiciary, and executive powers," could successfully control a community's death rate. Intrigued by Soper's evidence, Biggs sent Dr. Josephine Baker, the sanitary superintendent's assistant, to collect samples from Mallon. In her first attempt, Dr. Baker was no more successful than Soper. However, emboldened by public health's new juridical authority, she returned and under police escort took Mallon to Willard Parker hospital, where tests found her to carry *Salmonella typhi*. Despite remarkable advances in the field, New York City's health department found itself ill-equipped to manage its first healthy typhoid carrier. Thus, while City health officials debated the case's immediate policy challenges, Mallon was remanded to North Brother Island.

Unconvinced of the health department's diagnosis, Mallon sought every legal and scientific avenue to contest her quarantine. In 1910, she won her freedom by signing an affidavit promising not to seek employment as a cook. Her freedom was short lived. Investigating an outbreak of typhoid at the Sloane Maternity hospital, public health agents traced the source of the bacillus to the hospital's new cook, Mary Mallon. This time she

would be exiled to North Brother Island for the remainder of her life.

Mallon, as a biographical subject, has all but receded from America's historical imaginary. What remains is the ubiquitous metaphor, Typhoid Mary. The metaphor realizes its place in America's social imaginary by activating the fundamental attribute of modern subjectification: namely, its governmental imprimatur. Thus, as a narrative of being, modern "life-writing" traces not the unfolding of a being-in-the-world, but outlines the contours of the governmental. Put differently, biography traces the emergence of the subject.³⁰⁹ It is, therefore, not surprising when, nearly a century after she was first exiled to North Brother Island, Garrett encapsulates Mallon's life thus:

But after her release Mallon illegally returned to that profession under a pseudonym. When Biggs's staff tracked the belligerent and thoroughly uncooperative woman down, they exiled her to that island again, this time for the rest of her days. She would forever be remembered as Typhoid Mary.³¹⁰

Garrett's adjectival arsenal marks Mallon as "belligerent" and "thoroughly uncooperative," and therefore deserving of exile. Her biography of Mallon demonstrates the supremacy of public health as a social genre by reducing Mallon's 69 years of life

³⁰⁹ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 1st American ed. ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

³¹⁰ Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, 300.

into a medico-juridical account of non-compliance. Biography becomes parable.

Although it cannot and does not seek to escape biography's bio-political armature, Judith Leavitt's biography of Mallon, contrary to Garrett's, is attentive to those life moments and histories marginalized by the public health genre. Leavitt's account does not approach public health as an established discourse against which Mallon's biography unfolds. Rather, she assumes public health to be a fluid and adaptive discourse that reacted to Mallon as Mallon reacted to it. This approach allows Leavitt to question, for example, the disparate treatment Mallon receives when compared to other identified carriers. Leavitt writes of Tony Labella, an immigrant working in food processing, who was first identified as the carrier responsible for infecting eighty-seven persons in New York City, two of whom died. While being interviewed by the City's health department, Labella disappeared and was later discovered working in New Jersey when an outbreak of typhoid that killed three and infected thirty-five was traced to him.³¹¹ While Labella was uncooperative and documented to have infected and contributed to more deaths than Mallon, the public health organization's response to him was markedly different. Deemed a breadwinner and head of household,

³¹¹ Leavitt, 119.

he was set free and helped to locate a job in the construction industry to minimize the risks of contagion.³¹² Leavitt argues that the difference in treatment received by Mallon and Labella, among others, cannot be understood outside of the period's complex matrix of gender, class, and nationality. That is, Mallon's story is emblematic of early twentieth century deployment of a gender, class, and national orthopedics.

Priscilla Wald provides a useful structure for understanding the forces responsible for the unequal treatment of Mary Mallon. In "Cultures and Carriers: 'Typhoid Mary' and the Science of Social Control," Wald writes:

The prototypical story of "Typhoid Mary" influenced more than public health policy; it helped to articulate, as it fleshed out, a narrative that worked to contain dramatic changes in familial and social structure by linking transformations in gender roles to the fate of the (white) race and therefore to the security of the nation. Carrier narratives called forth the new authority of science to substantiate the danger and entrust the health and well-being of the nation to social engineers. . . .³¹³

Public health's interweaving of "carrier narratives" and "social control" fundamentally reconfigures the subject/citizen. Unlike earlier accounts of illness, which followed notions of suffering anchored in religious redemptive narratives, public health shifts

³¹² Ibid., 124.

³¹³ Priscilla Wald, "Cultures and Carriers: 'Typhoid Mary' and the Science of Social Control," *Social Text* 15, no. 3 and 4 (1997): 183.

the locus and burden of suffering.³¹⁴ Under this new regime, the sufferer's biography no longer conforms to the hagiographic genre, no longer revolves around a transcendental axis. Rather, biography becomes an accounting of the social. The redemptive exegesis is manifest not in a divine trial, but in sacrifice to the nation. Like the soldier called upon to surrender her life to defend the nation against its geo-political enemies, the patient is mobilized to defend the nation against its "biological" enemies. She must willingly forfeit freedom and choice before the collective good.

The significance of non-compliance in Garrett's biographical narrative of Mallon is to be understood in this context. What was at stake in Mallon's legal battle to refrain from giving specimens to the City's health officials and her resistance to involuntary confinement was not only a clash between early 1900s progressivism and the earlier, if not more mythic, American discourse of "extreme individualism," but her very Americanness. As Judith Leavitt writes:

Throughout the many accounts of her, her disease and in particular her status as a typhoid carrier are coded as gendered, racial, and class-based challenges to the family, to the nation, and most

³¹⁴One of the earliest examples of this is the Biblical narrative of Job. We find similar structure in African American slave narratives. Closely following the structure of the Old Testament, they reenact the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt.

dramatically to white Americanness.³¹⁵

Mallon's Americanness is weighed in decidedly gendered terms. Her unwillingness to sacrifice herself for the good of "America" raises questions about her fitness as a citizen and, more importantly, as a woman/mother. Put differently, in questioning public health's juridico-political mandate, she falters in her womanly duty to birth and nurture a healthy nation. This profoundly resonates with the turn of the century angst about the role of American women in safeguarding the country against "race suicide." Increased industrialization and the promise of greater leisure for American middle class women produced deep cultural anxieties. The new-woman's "refusal of domesticity and reproduction" was interpreted as a challenge to the social order and by extension a portent of America's cultural and political demise.³¹⁶ Wald notes:

The reproduction of Americans was a medical issue, one addressed predominantly to women (specially, mothers) and contingent upon the reproduction of carefully preserved gender roles: not only wife and mother, but also patriot and womanly woman.³¹⁷

The disquiet over gender roles, complicated in no small measure by the influx of immigrants, is evident in the gender markers

³¹⁵Wald, "Cultures and Carriers: 'Typhoid Mary' and the Science of Social Control," 202.

³¹⁶Ibid.

³¹⁷Ibid.: 204.

associated with Mallon.³¹⁸ She is described as a transgressive, recalcitrant, and "masculine woman."³¹⁹ Soper's description is especially telling. He notes: "nothing was so distinctive about her as her walk, unless it was her mind. The two had a peculiarity in common. . .Mary walked more like a man than a woman and . . . her mind has a distinct masculine character. . ."³²⁰ Thus, insofar as she failed to conform to prescribed models of femininity, she was disqualified as a citizen and exiled from the nation.

The public health inscriptions that gave rise to Typhoid Mary as a field of signification were much bolstered by the Cold War. Germ theory, which had ushered in the first major shift in public health discourse, found powerful complements in post-World War II advances in virology and immunology. While a great deal of research in the fields had taken place prior to the 1940s, it was not until the end of the Second World War that virology and immunology emerged as established disciplines. Their discursive preeminence, however, exceeded scientific advances. Inasmuch as they construe the body as bounded entities requiring strict internal surveillance, immunology and virology participate in an

³¹⁸ For a discussion of the general climate that surrounded immigration at the turn of the century America, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign People at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

³¹⁹Wald, "Cultures and Carriers: 'Typhoid Mary' and the Science of Social Control," 196.

intricate commerce of security metaphors with the state. As Daryl Ogden notes:

Virology and immunology therefore emerged as explanatory models of sickness and disease that drew in large measure on two distinct yet complementary Cold War horrors. Virologists postulated the existence of powerful viruses, dangerous enemies beyond the body's borders, capable of violating those borders under favorable circumstances. Quite differently, immunologists warned against healthy and sick Americans alike of formidable enemies within the body that appeared . . .to constitute the Self but were, in fact, the Other.³²¹

Immunology "as a map of systems of 'difference'" offered the state a naturalizing, scientific language.³²² Through a double-mirroring, the modern state came to understand itself engaged in differentiation, laboring, like the immune system, to distinguish the self from the non-self: the police and the judge become the analogs of lymphocytes and leukocytes. The healthy carrier is thus a danger to the body politic not because she is a silent carrier of deadly "germs," but because she is a "border figure." Her existence between illness and health, between citizenship and exile defies conventions and authority, disrupting the state's ability to recognize and construct the self.

In Cold War narratives, reactions to the disruptive impact

³²⁰ Soper quoted in Leavitt, 106-107.

³²¹ Daryl Ogden, "Cold War Science and the Body Politic: An Immuno/Virological Approach to *Angels in America*," *Literature and Medicine* 19, no. 2 (2000): 248.

of the border figures feature prominently. Fear of misrecognizing the stranger and the suspicion that the stranger's differences might not rise above the threshold of recognition is an overriding, if at times unconscious, element of America's cultural and political landscape. Prior to the end of the First World War, America relied largely on a visual grammar of difference. The Other was knowable by the color of his skin, the texture of his hair, the shape of his nose, by the visual syntagma of race. The Bolshevik revolution unsettled this visual syntax by introducing new ideological elements. After 1917, the face, the visual matrix of transparency, becomes, more than ever, the locus of the uncanny. It no longer obeyed a simple binarism of reflection, a visual index of the self and the Other. The Cold War, like a house of horror's distorting mirrors, deformed the face, reflecting back a face that was at once homely and unhomely. The Cold War's every reflection registered the suspicion that behind the familiar hid the stranger, the Communist Other.³²³

The neurosis induced by the fear of a visually indiscernible Other found patent articulation in the 1938 creation of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). A

³²² Donna Harraway, "Biopolitics of the postmodern Body," 217.

³²³ This anxiety is well documented in the post-WWII popularity of the invasion of the body snatcher sub-genre of science fiction films. See, for example, Don Siegel's 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatcher* and

standing committee of the House of Representatives under the leadership of Martin Dies, Representative of Texas, the HUAC sought to root out disloyalty and subversion. Echoing their puritanical forefathers' fight to preserve their fate against invisible enemies, the Committee's hearings were a citizenship auto-da-fé. If the Other could not be recognized by his face, he would be made recognizable through his utterances. The speech act involved in renouncing membership in the Communist party - "I am not nor have ever been a member of the Communist party" - was at once a linguistic performance of citizenship and, more importantly, an act of biological incorporation. The Committee's paranoiac posture, seeing a Communist plot in every dissenting gesture, betrays the conceptual limitations of the nation as a geo-culturally contiguous space. It traces a "diagram of relationships" that constitutes the nation as a political and immunological community.

To fully understand the relationship between the Red Scare's immunological accent and the production of the nation as an "imagined immunity," we must survey the post-Cold War extension of the discourse's dominant tropes. If the Red Scare inaugurated the nation as immunity discourse, the discourse found its full expression in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As argued above,

Philip Kaufman's 1978 film of the same title.

the HUAC hearings strove not simply to uncover individual ideological attachments, but sought to disentangle ideological communities. For this reason, an individual's declaration of allegiance, in and of itself, was insufficient. The accused demonstrated his social responsibility by participating in a project of contact tracing. He had - as illustrated by the Hollywood 10 - to expose those whom he knew or thought to be "contaminated." Similarly, the story of HIV/AIDS is the story of contact tracing as an act of citizenship.

One of the dominant HIV/AIDS narratives accords the epidemic a unique position in the annals of public health.³²⁴ Adherents to the "AIDS exceptionalism" narrative contend that the political and legal upheaval that attends the epidemic have suspended public health's use of its time-tested technologies - routine testing, reporting, contact tracing, and notification - for identifying and tracking at-risk groups, contributing to the continued rise in the rate of infection. While the political and cultural responses engendered by the epidemic are undoubtedly unique, the AIDS exceptionalism argument does not, however, speak to the concerns of AIDS activists: namely, the relationship between epidemiology and governmentality. For, as Catherine Waldby argues, HIV testing illustrates, a la "Typhoid Mary," the

³²⁴ Chandler Burr, "The Aids Exception: Privacy Vs. Public Health," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1997.

construction of an epidemiological map.³²⁵ Testing does not merely isolate the virus, but marks dangerous behaviors and delimits at-risk communities. The resulting map is, therefore, not a disinterested construction. As opponents of routine testing – testing without the patient’s expressed consent – assert, the identification of HIV/AIDS with the gay community – “the gay disease” – renders testing positive for the virus a de facto affirmation of homosexuality.³²⁶ The test is, they maintain, less a screen for the HIV virus than a determination of identity.³²⁷ It effects an immunological-cum-national diagram that conceives of HIV/AIDS as an “elective disease,”³²⁸ and the HIV/AIDS patient as an Other.

The AIDS exceptionalism suggested correlation between a weakened public health infrastructure and the increased incidence of HIV/AIDS is animated not by a concern for the well-being of sufferers, but by the fear that the ecology of behaviors associated with the HIV virus – homosexuality and intravenous

³²⁵Catherine Waldby, *Aids and the Body Politics: Biomedicine and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 100.

³²⁶ For a detailed history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States, see Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People and the Aids Epidemic* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

³²⁷ For an example of the refusal to identify HIV/AIDS with the heterosexual community, see Michael Fumento, *The Myth of Heterosexual Aids* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1993).

³²⁸ Cindy Patton, *Sex and Germs: The Politics of Aids* (Boston: South End Press, 1985).

drug use – elude state surveillance.³²⁹ The imbrication of the spaces of HIV/AIDS with the extra-legal spaces of homosexuality and drug use converts persons living with AIDS into border figures against which the state enacts a discourse of belonging and citizenship. The use of HIV/AIDS in a theater of citizenship is powerfully affirmed in the battles over entitlement. Much as in Mary Mallon's case nearly a century earlier, the social negotiations over the AIDS epidemic are political and cultural acts that rest on the legal conception of the family, and, by extension, on the necessary qualifications for lawful incorporation into the nation. The Will – a singular legal instrument in the codification of family and social networks – becomes an important terrain on which the definition of marriage, the right to make decisions on behalf of a dying partner, and the right to inherit property are re-negotiated in the age of AIDS. Wills, as Cindy Patton affirms, “have provided some of the nastiest legal encounters in the AIDS crisis.”³³⁰ For too many in the AIDS community, protracted legal battles punctuate the disease's end-stage. Often during this stage or soon after the person's death, parents and family members return to contest powers of attorney and wills. The state's refusal to acknowledge

³²⁹ For a discussion of homosexuality as an ecology, see Gabriel Rotello, *Sexual Ecology: Aids and the Destiny of Gay Men* (New York: Dutton, 1997).

³³⁰ Patton, 70.

non-traditional family arrangements leaves partners and support networks powerless against the legal onslaught by the patient's biological, state-sanctioned family. The state harnesses this medico-juridical nexus to reaffirm the definition of the family as a bio-legal entity and as the foundational precursor to the nation-state. In so doing, it not only excludes gays from an important domain of legal protection, but it marks them as marginal to the nation.³³¹

These enactments of public health's bio-power, the use of HIV to arrest the fluid discourse of belonging, are absent from analysis such as Garrett's. Garrett's *Betrayal of Trust*, for example, deflects the imprint of citizenship manifest in the transformation of the subject into a "social being." As both Mary Mallon's case and the HIV/AIDS epidemic illustrate, public health transforms the carrier's micropolitical network into a metaphor of the macropolitical. Private behaviors and structures of belonging are made to accord with a national imaginary: Citizenship becomes an act of piety. Garrett's narrative invokes a Lockean social contract to justify public health impinging on social freedoms. The curtailing of individual autonomy is deemed

³³¹ For an analysis of the construction of space and belonging in the "age of AIDS," see Lauren Berlant, "Live Sex Acts [Parental Advisory: Explicit Material]," in *In near Ruins: Cultural Theory at the End of the Century*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See also Katherine Boo, "What Mother Teresa Could Learn in a Leather Bar," *The Washington Monthly*, June 1991.

a necessary sacrifice that ensures the collective good and preserves the nation's viability. This narrative functions through the simultaneous play of exclusion and inclusion. In a defensive act, the state excludes the carrier from the nation by cordoning him within an epidemiological community. The exclusion is, however, never complete, for the state relies on the internal presence of the carrier to deploy the narrative of citizenship-as-sacrifice as an essential attribute of patriotism. Paradoxically, the state's reliance on the carrier's liminality disrupts the national narrative by destabilizing the sacrosanct role of borders, a complication that public health addresses by resorting to a geo-political narrative of origin: enter Colette Matshimoseka.

The "Wall of Disease"

In the very principle of its constitution, in its language, and in its finalities, narrative about Africa is always pretext for a comment about something else, some other place, some other people.³³²

Randy Shilts' celebrated history of the first years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States, *And the Band Played On*,³³³ begins with a detailed account of the illness and death of Margrethe Rask, a Danish surgeon working in Abumombazi, northern

³³² Mbembe, 3.

³³³ Shilts.

Zaire. The account, as with so many (ex)colonial missionary biographical sketches, follows a predictable trajectory: it is a tale of heroism and sacrifice and a morality play. Dr. Rask, an energetic health crusader, forfeits a lucrative career in “the sprawling modern hospitals of Copenhagen” to brave the risks of “primitive medicine” in a region of the world that “sire(s) new diseases with nightmarish regularity.”³³⁴ It was, therefore, not cause for alarm when Dr. Rask began complaining of fatigue and gastric ailments. Deemed consistent with the illnesses endemic to the region, her symptoms were addressed accordingly, and, as testament to her dedication and tenacity, she immersed herself in the clinic’s perennial medical and logistical crisis despite growing fatigue and weight loss. By the winter of 1976, however, persistent fatigue, a growing list of symptoms, and an unstable lymphatic system forced her to return to Denmark for treatment. Her return home provided no relief. Denmark’s leading specialists were unable to explain her low T-cell count and the myriad of opportunistic infections that plagued her. After months of tests and treatments, Dr. Rask died on December 12, 1977 of *Pneumocystis carinii*.

The early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States are a case study in frustration. The name first given to

³³⁴ Ibid., 4.

the syndrome, "the Gay disease," captures the exasperation of a medical community unable to cope with mounting numbers of patients presenting with symptoms and illnesses for which it had no clear diagnosis or treatment.³³⁵ Thus, by 1987, Margrethe Rask's story would have been hardly unique to Shilts. It is, therefore, curious that he should begin his account with Dr. Rask's story, locating HIV/AIDS not in New York or San Francisco, his geographical subjects, but in Abumombazi, Zaire. When placed in the context of Western HIV/AIDS narratives, however, Shilts' choice of Central Africa as an anchor for his account reveals an instinct that finds Africa the necessary starting point of all narratives about viral pandemics.³³⁶ This narrational finger pointing betrays efforts at reconciling the presence of the carrier within the West's "immunological community." To understand the reflex that informs the fixing of Africa as the locus of origin of viral pandemics, we must return to the intersection of imagined immunity, travel, and geopolitics.

In 1994, *The Atlantic Monthly* ran a cover story by Robert Kaplan titled "The Coming Anarchy: How scarcity, crime,

³³⁵ For a first person account of the emergence of HIV/AIDS in the U.S., see Abraham Verghese, *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

³³⁶ For two narratives that trace the origins of HIV/AIDS to Africa, see Mirko D. Grmek, *History of Aids: Emergence and Origin of a Modern Pandemic*, trans. Russel C. Maulitz and Jacalyn Duffin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Edward Hooper, *The River: A Journey to the Source of Hiv and Aids* (New York: Little, Brown

overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet.” The essay begins thus:

The Minister’s eyes were like egg yolks, an aftereffect of some of the many illnesses, malaria especially, endemic in his country. There was also an irrefutable sadness in his eyes. He spoke in a slow and cracking voice, the voice of hope about to expire.³³⁷

Kaplan’s informant, “my friend the Minister,” is anonymous. Kaplan is silent about the minister’s identity and the identity of the minister’s country, for, he tells us, he fears, were he to reveal his source, the official’s “life would be threatened.”³³⁸ His subsequent remarks, however, index a different intent. Commenting on crime, he notes: “crime is what makes West Africa a natural point of departure for my report on what the political character of our planet is likely to be in the twenty-first century.”³³⁹ In Kaplan’s apocalyptic future, Africa has a prophetic, if dystopic, role.³⁴⁰ West African countries, from Liberia to Nigeria, conjure the Chicagos³⁴¹ of the future, the bands of “armed burglars, carjackers, muggers,” and “the groups of young men with restless and scanning eyes” that haunt the

& Company, 2000).

³³⁷ Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, 44.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid., 45.

³⁴⁰ Although Kaplan reserves his most acerbic comments to West Africa, his observations are not limited to the African continent. His vision of a dystopic future encompasses the entire South.

³⁴¹ The Chicago Kaplan cites in his essay is a cardboard

futurist's dreams. Africa's prophetic function arises from its allochronic relation to the West. The denial of coevalescence operates, in Kaplan's account, through the withholding of historical and cultural specificity: his West Africa is populated by nameless, "inscrutable masses." The refusal to engage with Africa on its own terms accomplishes two things. First, insofar as Africans in the account lack proper names, they are easily absorbed into the familiar. The absence of specificity denies the Continent and its inhabitants' agency, rendering them passive in the West's cultural and historical play. Second, the absence of proper names conversely transforms the Continent into a strange and anarchic landscape, where children with "protruding bellies, seem[ed] as numerous as ants."³⁴² Africa becomes a meta-text of the uncanny. The Continent is both a sign of the familiar and the strange and monstrous: it is an historical rearview mirror and a crystal ball.

Kaplan casts a wide net in his search for answers to Africa's disintegration. His explanations range from familiar accusations about the civic and moral turpitude of urban living - the absence of fathers, disintegration of family - to Africans' belief in "superficial Islam and Christianity." However, the *bête-noire* of his argument is the collapse of nation-states.

shantytown in the outskirts of Abidjan, the Ivory Coast.

³⁴² Kaplan, 48.

Kaplan notes that there is “no other place on the planet where political maps are so deceptive – where they tell such lies – as in West Africa.”³⁴³ Ignoring the artificiality of all cartographic constructions, he argues, using Sierra Leon as an example, that Africa’s geo-political map misrepresents conditions on the ground. While putatively ruled by the twenty-seven-year-old army captain, Valentine Strasser, Sierra Leon is under the de facto control of a fluid and volatile mix of ethnic factions making it impossible to establish a de jure national government. Moreover, protracted conflicts in the region – the wars in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leon – have regularly displaced populations across national borders rendering cartographic boundaries untenable. This, Kaplan contends, has resulted in “a pre-modern formlessness” that resembles Europe pre-Westphalia.

Kaplan holds the implosion of postcolonial states responsible for the systemic problems that are now de rigueur in Africa and elsewhere in the South. He draws a causal connection between the “very unstable social fluid” – resulting from the collapse of nation-states – and famines, deforestation, soil erosion, flooding and the explosive rise of epidemics. These conditions, taken as a whole, he maintains, have replaced recognizable, operative national boundaries by “walls of

³⁴³ Ibid.

disease.” He writes:

Africa may today be more dangerous in this regard than it was in 1862, before antibiotics, when the explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton describes the health situation on the continent as “deadly, a Golgotha, a Jehannum.”³⁴⁴

Echoing early 19th century travel writers, Kaplan represents the Africa of the future as an impenetrable fortress of malaria and warring natives. He avers:

The coming upheaval, in which foreign embassies are shut down, states collapse, and contact with the outside world takes place through dangerous, disease-ridden coastal trading posts, will loom large in the century we are entering.³⁴⁵

The imagined “wall of disease” reactivates the colonial grammar of signification: Africa is again alien; it is the dark, blank, and unexplored continent of Victorian atlases.³⁴⁶

Through the evocation of over-coded imagery, Kaplan re-primitivizes Africa, a move that is of singular import in writings about epidemics. The trope of the primitive delimits a boundary between the North and the South that, as Heather Schell notes, transforms the latter into a location where pathogens “practice on local populations in preparation for pandemics.”³⁴⁷ Kaplan’s primitivist bio-cartography, however, differs from past

³⁴⁴Ibid., 6.

³⁴⁵Ibid., 6-7.

³⁴⁶Ibid., 46.

³⁴⁷ Heather Schell, “Outbursts!: A Chilling True Story About Emerging-Virus Narratives and Pandemic Social Change,” *Configurations*

articulations in its appreciation of late-modernity's deterritorializing flows of bodies and cultures. For in negating the notion that "disorder [does] not travel,"³⁴⁸ he sets diseases in motion and embraces the possibility that the next outbreak will come from outside Western borders.

The movement and, more importantly, the dangers to which Kaplan gestures are instructive. As Mary Mallon's case illustrates, we must look beyond bio-medical discourse to comprehend the fear the movement of pathogens elicits. That is, the migration of pathogens must be read in the context of the history of colonial encounters.³⁴⁹ Modern history has no greater example of the movement of diseases than that inscribed in the bodies and memories of millions of natives the world over. While historicopolitical treatments of colonial encounters often overlook the devastating effects of European diseases on colonial populations, pathogens – from syphilis to small pox – were the first vectors of assault on the colonized body.³⁵⁰ The movements of Europeans across the globe were responsible for spreading illnesses with a catastrophic effect on colonized populations. Present accounts of emergent diseases, however, downplay this

5, no. 1 (1997): 115.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ See, for example, Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Society* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

³⁵⁰ See David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

earlier epoch in the global flow of diseases. Cindy Patton offers an insight into this apparent historical paramnesia when, commenting on tropical medicine, she notes that it

relies on a diasporal imaginary of displacement and return that presumes that local diseases do not affect indigenous people in the same way that they affect the Euro-American occupier. A tropical disease is always proper to a place, to *there*, but only operates as *disease* when it affects people from *here*. Pathogens in a locale achieve historicity only when consolidated as diseased in a colonist's body.³⁵¹

This helps to explain why outbreaks of diseases in the Third World ring a decidedly lower note of panic than when they threaten the West.

The bio-geographical provenance, the attribution of place to disease enabled by the primitive trope, captures the flows of diseases within a rigid discursive frame.³⁵² For the colonial observer, the decimation of large segments of the world's native populations by tuberculosis, small pox, and other diseases - for which native populations in the Americas, Africa, and Asia had no immunity - was far from tragic. It was a confirmation of divine providence. Europe understood the death of Native Americans, Caribs, and others natives as testament to the wisdom of colonial

³⁵¹Cindy Patton, "Queer Peregrinations," in *Challenging Boundaries*, ed. Michael J. Shapiro and Hayward R. Alker (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 369.

³⁵² Marie Louise Pratt offers an insightful analysis of the relationship between European scientific discourse, especially in its attempts to construct a universal taxonomic structure, and the fixing

expansion and as a necessary stage in the unfolding of history.

Conversely, for Europeans who ventured into the interior of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, the danger of contracting malaria and other tropical diseases was a necessary burden to be borne in the name of civilization. This pre-jet age commerce in pathogens does not figure in present accounts of emergent diseases. These accounts are elements of an epistemic machine that holds the South, Africa in particular, in historic and imaginative suspension. Thus, insofar as the South is confined outside Europe's historical rhythms, it is rendered into a repository of potential history: the South possesses no actual history, except as a marker of the West's historical beginning. It is this confinement - this being-for-others - that late-modern flows promise to disrupt. Late-modernity threatens to actualize the Other's historical potential. The Other's imminent escape from his historical suspension prompts in the European imaginary a confrontation between modernity - represented by *medicine* as the sine qua non of instrumental reason - and pre-modernity in the figure of the anachronistic superbug.

This confrontation incites a border creating terror. In marking emergent diseases as pre-modern presences, the West exteriorizes the historicopolitical and geographical loci of

of the Other within a historic negative. See Pratt.

superbugs, which explains, for example, Shilts' consignment of HIV/AIDS to Abumombazi, Zaire. More importantly, by locating the origin of superbugs elsewhere, the West creates the condition of possibility for a global capture that arrests globalization's destabilizing flows. Put differently, while in Mary Mallon's case and in that of the Red Scare the threat was thought internal to the nation-state, the projection of present destabilizing forces onto an exterior presence necessitates a rearticulation of sovereignty and international relations. States employ late-modernity's agent of terror, the superbug, to reclaim the viability of nation-states against the global movements of peoples and cultures. In the emerging discourse, the inwardly focused immunological grammar of earlier public health discourses can no longer sustain the biopolitical discourse. The state makes recourse to virology for linguistic and epistemic scaffolding. For, contrary to immunology, virology's preoccupation is not with recognition writ large, but with border surveillance. It defines the self not through the internal policing of a figurative community, the disambiguating of the self from the non-self, but through the rigid policing of the body's boundaries.

The state's appropriation of immunology's and virology's grammar is not, however, a mutually exclusive proposition. The function of disease as metaphor of the body politic is neither

exclusively inwardly nor outwardly directed. The virological and immunological grammars are conjunctural. They provide the nation a means to regulate internal and external threats to its stability. However, the present prominence of viral metaphors is symptomatic of a change in statist concerns. The post-1989 purported neo-liberalist triumph has lessened anxieties about ideological disintegration while heightening concerns about the cultural, linguistic, and political implications of globalization's deterritorializing force. Virology is thus of great import for it provides a matrix of signification for contemporary border surveillance.

The surveillance apparatus that monitors the movements of populations across state borders activates a globalization discourse animated by racial differences. This discourse inflects racist articulations – based on a semiotics of difference linking cultural and epistemic differences to genetic make-up – with an over-coded and deadly microbial symbiosis. In contemporary narratives about present and future pandemics, Otherness is sustained not simply by race as a grammar of visible differences, but, more problematic, by the linking of the “epidermal racial schema” with an invisible bio-genetic threat: the Other becomes synonymous with deadly pathogens. As Schell notes:

Debates about national and personal boundaries are

unfolding within our anxious apprehensions of an approaching viral pandemic. The virus emerges as a dangerous foreign being: a fecund, primitive yet evolving, hungry, needy, African predator unleashed by modern travel from the last recess of the wild. It wants to immigrate, with or without a visa. It demands attention in the form of resistance or capitulation. While ostensibly pondering the possible overthrow of the food chain, virus discourse imagines the overthrow of the social order.³⁵³

The American Red Cross' blood donation eligibility guidelines powerfully illustrate this blurring of the lines between microbes and their ostensible African hosts. Following the Food and Drug Administration's precepts for identifying persons at increased risk for HIV, the American Red Cross excludes from the pool of eligible blood donors all sexually active homosexual males, IV drug users, hemophiliacs, prostitutes, and persons who were "born in or lived in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Niger, or Nigeria since 1977."³⁵⁴ The principles for exclusion participate in a widely accepted mapping of HIV risks. They distinguish "at risk" persons by enacting a division between behavioral and geographic risks. Behavioral risks, a category sensitive to the "intra" national community, participate in the scripting of a moral cartography. The concern for the safety of

³⁵³Schell: 96.

³⁵⁴ American Red Cross, "Blood Donation Guidelines;" available from <http://www.redcross.org/services/biomed/blood/learn/eligibl.html>. The listed of excluded countries is likely to expand to include most of

the State's blood supply overtly marks homosexuality, prostitution, and other non-state sanctioned sexual behaviors as dangerous to individuals and potentially deadly for the nation. However, while the guidelines renounce "risky" behaviors, they leave open the possibility of redemption. The prostitute, the homosexual male, and those who have sought the services of prostitutes - all those who have transgressed against the traditional family's sacred reproductive order - may donate blood, may reenter the national community, if they abstain from risky behaviors for at least 12 months.³⁵⁵

For the geographically ineligible, those persons born in Central or West Africa since 1977, there are no such provisions. Irrespective of behavior, there is no waiting period of eligibility for the Nigerian or Congolese. This blanket exclusion is all the more remarkable given the FDA's requirement that all donated blood be tested for the HIV virus. The geographical exclusion disqualifies Central and West Africans from performing in one of the State's decisive symbolic arenas of community formation: the donation of blood as an affirmation of consanguinity.

The gross dissymmetry between behavioral and geographic risk factors spotlights the statist deployment of "sovereignty-

Sub-Saharan Africa and a great deal of South Asia.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

as-exceptional-enactment.”³⁵⁶ Diseases, like HIV, expose our collective vulnerability, our species’ being-in-common, while they reveal our differential susceptibility, a fact demonstrated by the expression “living with HIV.” The phrase, meant to capture our shifting medical and cultural relationship to HIV, obscures a wide and growing gap between the effects of class, gender, race, and geography on persons infected with the virus. It conceals, for example, the prohibitive prices of the drugs responsible for the transformation of HIV/AIDS into a chronic ailment, a disease with which very few can afford to live. It is, however, to the inherent mobility of pathogens, to their potential for smoothing spaces and leveling differences that the “wall of disease,” most poignantly captured by the Red Cross’ blood donation guidelines, reacts. The quarantining of the cultural and geographic Other within a global epidemiological map negates the possibility of an immunological species-being. Rather, it affirms a new (inter)national relations that fractures the globe into distinct and incompatible bio-cultural regions. The new “inter” of the emergent international relations expands the family’s constitutive ontopolitical role. Familial co-sanguinity assumes a civilizational-cum-regional scope, a structure that, in part, sustains Huntington’s civilizational

³⁵⁶ Michael J. Shapiro, *For Moral Ambiguity: National Culture and the Politics of the Family* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

map. Huntington's use of the term "kin-country" is not accidental. It sustains a geopolitical construct that reclaims the viability of nation-states by staging cultural and political encounters as bio-ontological confrontations.

The bio-ontological confrontation that animates Huntington's and Kaplan's civilization maps is made possible, paradoxically, by their embracing of the globe as a unitary present. Globalization, in Kaplan's view, accelerates encounters and truncates differences. The result is a bifurcated globe that places Hegel's and Fukuyama's Last Man, "healthy, well fed, and pampered by technology," in a collision course with Hobbes' First Man, "condemned to a life that is 'poor, nasty, brutish, and short'." This interface is the condition of possibility for rearticulating nation-states and globalization. It inflects the global by substituting a species-being-in-common with a Western-being-in-common. This is possible because the Other is not excluded from the articulation of the global, but relegated to bare life. Kaplan's and Huntington's maps evince Agamben's "sovereignty-as-exceptional-enactment" in their topology of difference. Agamben notes that:

the sovereign exception is the fundamental localization, which does not limit itself to distinguishing what is inside from what is outside but instead traces a threshold (the state of

exception) between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of juridical order possible.³⁵⁷

This topology explains the instinct that isolates Africa, among others, as the locus proper of disease. The homology between Otherness and biological danger does not simply disqualify Nigerians, Congolese, and others from meaningful participation in the political, but transforms them into the West's negatively constituted dyadic complement. The Other, in Fanon's Sartrean phenomenology, "has no ontological resistance."³⁵⁸ His is a being-for-others.

Wolfgang Petersen's *Outbreak*, released in 1995, illustrates this matrix at work. Briefly summarized, the film tracks a string of events leading to an outbreak of the fictive Motaba, "a rare killer from the jungles of Zaire," in the town of Cedar Creek, California. *Outbreak* begins, as does Shilts' *An the Band Played On*, with a detour. The film's opening scene is a flashback to 1967. The location, Motaba River Valley, Zaire, is a fallen Eden. Gunfire and explosions interrupt the camera's flyover of the tranquil rainforest canopy. The camera captures the chaos that reigns below the canopy in an extreme close-up of howling monkeys running from soldiers in pitched gunfight. Petersen's gaze is

³⁵⁷Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer : Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 19.

not, however, merely ethnographic. He does not restrict himself to reporting on the conflict inside or outside the camera's frame. Rather, the reason for the detour becomes evident when the camera pans onto a mercenary camp, where, in a makeshift hospital, American and Belgian mercenaries have been laid down not by bullets, but by a mysterious disease: the dreaded Motaba. The opening scene's visual syntax, the juxtaposition of the jungle, war, and disease, structures the ideological scaffolding that supports the film's narrative.

To the jungle/Zaire's chaos and disorder, *Outbreak* counterpoises the orderliness of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID). Petersen's camera creates a structural homology between the opening scenes' jungle flyover and the camera's movement through the Institute's spatial grid. Through a steady-cam sequence, the film moves through the laboratories' progressively higher bio-safety levels, arriving at level four, the "hot zone." The bio-safety levels denote a scale of danger that runs from familiar pathogens – Pneumococcus and Salmonella – to exotic killers – Ebola, Lassa, and Hanta viruses. The camera's movement enacts a spatial narrative of danger. The greater the distance from the familiar, from the Institute's bureaucratic center, the more pronounced the danger of

³⁵⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 110.

contagion.³⁵⁹ The film, however, disciplines the possibility of contagion in the laboratory. Increased layers of protection accompany the camera's movement toward the "hot zone." Computers, security cameras, armed guards, and ionic radiation scrubbers vigilantly regulate the traffic between each successive level. In controlling the possibility of infection, the film furthers the distinction between the lab and the jungle. The Army laboratories are heterotopic spaces that not only contain the world's most virulent organism, but, more importantly, create a "space that is other, another space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled."³⁶⁰

Petersen reproduces the heterotopy between the jungle and the lab by contrasting the USARMIID's intensely regulated space to the fluidity and vulnerability of the home. The camera cuts in quick succession from the laboratory's ascetic order to the disarray of Colonel Sam Daniels' (Dustin Hoffman) home. The two filmic spaces overlap in their differential relation to the jungle's encroaching disorder. The laboratory's vigilance against the "killer from the jungles of Zaire" stands in marked relief to the innocent disorder of Sam's kitchen. This

³⁵⁹ For a treatment of the link between spatial dislocation and danger, see Helms.

³⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 27.

juxtaposition renders transparent Petersen's choice of USARMIID.³⁶¹ It implicitly acknowledges biological threats, as Laurie Garrett suggests, as belonging to the military domain.³⁶² Moreover, through a sustained metonymy between the family and the nation, *Outbreak* references the innocence signified by the kitchen, the family's symbolic center, to the nation's vulnerability. Colonel Daniels and Major Salt's (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) search for Motaba's carrier, an African monkey set loose in the woods of Cedar Creek, completes this metonymic arch. Sited at the kitchen table a young girl draws pictures of the monkey, which has taken residence outside her kitchen windows, while in the background a television news brief asks for the public's help in locating the dangerous animal. The television, through the news anchor's allocution, places the kitchen squarely within the nation's civic space. It effaces the borders between the kitchen's private space and the nation's public space, transforming the girl's naive drawings into a nationally ominous sign.

The complex family/nation finds full expression in

³⁶¹ In Robin Cook's *Outbreak* the agents are researchers at the CDC. Despite their title of epidemiological agents, they are civilian physicians who volunteer to work in CDC's special pathogens labs. This lends the work a clear distance from the more military aspect of Petersen's *Outbreak*.

³⁶² The film explores the other side of this equation when Sam learns that the U.S. army, under the leadership of General Donald McClintock (Donald Sutherland) had been exploring the possible uses of

Petersen's folding onto the epidemiological thriller the melodrama of Sam and Robby's (Rene Russo) failed marriage. After years of living and working together, the "virus hunters" marriage succumbs to the job's pressures. The dangers posed by the virus are, therefore, not restricted to individuals, but extend to the nation's formative social and civic bonds. A contact tracing montage that follows the aerosolized virus, expelled by a cough, as it moves through a crowded movie theater captures Motaba's threat to the body politic. The virus' path through the theater links the audience into the social and civic entity that is Cedar Creek, a "small town, like a family." Motaba's infective flight, however, disrupts the very social and civic bonds it traces. It transmutes all familial contact, every act of affection, into a potentially deadly gesture. While this milieu proves toxic to most families, it has the obverse effect on Sam and Robby. As Karen Schneider has observed, Motaba's "profoundly unnatural breakdown of the patriarchal family unit can only be averted by the concerted reconstitution of the heterosexual team working together to fend off the monstrous."³⁶³ The outbreak in Cedar Creek stages the reunion of the divorced couple. Sent by the CDC to Cedar Creek to help control the outbreak, Robby pricks herself with a contaminated needle whilst

Motaba as a biological weapon.

³⁶³ Karen Schneider, "With Violence If Necessary," *Journal of*

treating a patient. Her infection crystallizes Sam's efforts to find a serum. With a husband's devotion, he violates his superior's every order in his search. He demonstrates his heroic commitment to the family when, in violation of isolation protocols and unsure that the serum he has found will work, he removes his mask to touch Robby's hand to his face. The touch, unmediated by the biohazard suit, restores the couple's bond and gestures to the survival of heteronormal family.

Motaba's role in *Outbreak* mirrors that of HIV in the Red Cross' guidelines. Both place families and nations "at risk only to bring about their salvation."³⁶⁴ Insofar as they are perceived as exterior threats, they help to mobilize the nation's surveillance machine. In its construction of danger, the state retraces the nation-state's boundaries and rearticulates the global.



Figure 3: Motaba reconciles Sam and Robby.

How We Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Virus

The United Nations estimates that 4.2 million South Africans, approximately 20 percent of the nation's population, are HIV positive.³⁶⁵ Compelled by the epidemic's magnitude, South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, set out to find answers. In interviews and in a letter to Kofi Anan and President Bill Clinton, Mbeki admits spending countless sleepless nights poring

³⁶⁵ Rachel L. Swarns, "Dissent on Aids by South Africa's President: Thoughtfulness or Folly?" *The New York Times*, July 8 2000, A5. Countries in the Southern and Eastern Africa have not fared better. In cities like Lusaka, Zambia and Kampala, Uganda 20% of adults are estimated to HIV positive. See Erik Eckholm and John Tierney, "Aids in Africa: A Killer Rages On," *The New York Times*, September 16 1990, 14.

over scientific and medical documents and surfing the Web in an attempt to understand HIV/AIDS disproportionate impact on Africa.³⁶⁶ He is unconvinced by the answers he finds. The scientific community attributes the geometric disparity in rates of infection between Africa, India, and the West to infective differences in the variants of HIV-1. They contend that while the subtype B of HIV-1 accounts for the majority of HIV infections in Europe and the United States, the subtype C of HIV-1 - a far more virulent strain of HIV transmitted primarily through heterosexual sex - affects Africa and India.³⁶⁷ Although this theory accounts for some of the differences in rates of infection, Mbeki argues that it does not satisfactorily explain the magnitude of the differences. In the letter, he asserts that he is

convinced that our urgent task is to respond to the specific threat that faces us as Africans. We will not eschew this obligation in favour of the comfort of the recitation of a catechism that may very well be a correct response to the specific manifestations of AIDS in the West.³⁶⁸

Spurred by the belief that current scientific explanations are impoverished by their failure to develop context-specific models for the epidemic, President Mbeki assembled a blue ribbon

³⁶⁶ Michael Cherry, "Letter Fuels South Africa's Aids Furore," *Nature*, April 27 2000, 911.

³⁶⁷ Rachel L. Swarns, "Mbeki Details Quest to Grasp South Africa's Aids Disaster," *The New York Times*, May 7 2000, 16.

advisory panel of 30 international experts to meet in South Africa to "re-evaluate" the cause of AIDS.³⁶⁹ There was an instant outcry from the scientific community over the panel's composition. The HIV/AIDS community was incensed by Mbeki's inclusion among the panel's 30 members of two scientists they considered "heretics." The two American scientists, David Rasnick, a biochemist, and Peter Duesberg, a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at Berkeley, maintain that there is no conclusive evidence that HIV is the etiologic agent of AIDS, a conclusion Mbeki rejects. Rather, Rasnick and Duesberg contend, the causes of AIDS are poverty and malnutrition. The scientific community engaged in an unprecedented public relations campaign aimed at forcing Mbeki to excuse the heretics from the panel and to affirm that HIV is the sole etiologic agent of AIDS. In an open letter published in *Nature*, a group of international scientists, somewhat contradictorily, insisted that though they valued open debate they failed to see the value in "giving excessive credence to populist hypotheses that fly in the face of established evidence and fail to survive rigorous peer review."³⁷⁰

The chorus of disapproval over the panel's inclusion of

³⁶⁸ Cherry, 911.

³⁶⁹ "Declaration for Aids Sufferers," *Nature*, July 6 2000, 1.

³⁷⁰ "Dear Mr Mbeki . . . :An Open Letter to the President of South Africa," *Nature*, April 27 2000, 907.

Rasnick and Duesberg were rivaled only by outcries over Mbeki's stance on AZT. While surfing the Web, President Mbeki came across a paper in the journal *Current Medical Research and Opinion*, co-authored by Gordon Stewart and Eleni Papadopolous-Eleopulos, arguing that AZT, the recommended treatment against vertical transmission of HIV, is "so toxic as to be a health hazard."³⁷¹ Mbeki responded to AZT's potential toxicity by limiting its "irresponsible" distribution until its "safety [is] established," and by asking Western pharmaceutical companies to produce less toxic and cheaper formulations of antiretroviral drugs, or South Africa would be forced to seek parallel imports and would begin to explore the feasibility of manufacturing the drugs.³⁷² This drew into the fray powerful pharmaceutical interests and states, globalizing the furor. Below, I use Thabo Mbeki's forays into public health and medicine as an exemplary counter-discourse to the medicalization of difference. I argue that responses to his interventions are informed less by the conviction that he holds heretical views than by the fear that his views may destabilize the public health-cum-medical construction of the globe.

Under the pall of Mbeki's purported genocidal neglect, over

³⁷¹ Michael Cherry, "South Africa Says Aids Drug 'Toxic'," *Nature*, November 4 1999, 3.

³⁷² Ibid. See also Swarns, "Mbeki Details Quest to Grasp South Africa's Aids Disaster," 16.

12,000 physicians, scientists, and activist met in Durban, South Africa in July 2000 for the thirteenth International AIDS Conference. For the first time in the Conference's history, it was being held in Africa, the Continent reputed to be the epicenter of the AIDS pandemic. The exchanges that followed provide a productive counterpoint to the territorializing drive of the carrier narrative. President Mbeki began his opening address by calling the audience's attention to the Conference's geographic and political setting. "You are in Africa," he declared. Not only was the Conference taking place in the African continent, but it was being hosted by a newly "democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa." In geopolitically anchoring the Conference, Mbeki foregrounds the disjunctive nature of the international discourse on HIV/AIDS. In exchanges and pronouncements of international organizations, Africa recurs "with frightening frequency - Africa, Africa, Africa," Mbeki affirms.³⁷³ However, while the Continent has the lead role in this "tale of human woe" - an object to be paraded as a moral lesson - it is seldom an agent of health policies.

Mbeki's introduction changed the Conference's governing motif. He forced the audience of scientists and clinicians to

³⁷³ Thabo Mbeki, *Speech of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the Opening Session of the 13th International Aids Conference*(www.aids2000.com/, 2000, accessed July 20 2000); available from www.aids2000.com/projects/aidsonline/aidshomepage.nsf/.

consider a change of genre in the writing of the HIV/AIDS narrative. He began by quoting at length from the World Health Organization's 1995 World Health Report. He notes: "The world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill-health and suffering across the globe is listed almost at the end of the International Classification of Disease. It is given the code Z59.5 - extreme poverty." His is a strategic move. Mbeki does not select HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, or any of a number of other illnesses ranked as high priorities by the International Classification of Disease. Rather, he focuses on extreme poverty, the last entry in the classification. Poverty's liminal position in the classificatory schema of disease, straddling the divide between the medical, political, and economic allows Mbeki to move the topos of the AIDS narrative from the mono-causal, clinical to a complex conjunction of the scientific, clinical, political, and economic.

In zeroing in on poverty, Mbeki reinterpreted the HIV/AIDS pandemic, forcing the audience to confront globalization's dominant narratives. As I have explored above, the movement of people across national borders, producing a geo-political cartography based on the fear of contagion, is one of the carrier narrative's principal tropes. Mbeki's remarks use the carrier narratives' preoccupation with travel to a different effect. His is not a global mapping of the movement of disease, but of

inequality. He, once again, quotes from the WHO's World Health Report. He notes:

In the space of a day passengers flying from Japan to Uganda leave the country with the world's highest life expectancy - almost 79 years - and land in one of the world's lowest - barely 42 years. A day away by plane, but half a lifetime's difference on the ground. A flight between France and Cote d'Ivoire takes only a few hours, but it spans almost 26 years of life expectancy. A short air trip between Florida in the USA and Haiti represents a life expectancy gap of over 19 years.³⁷⁴

He adds further that five years after the report was issued "the essential elements of this story have not changed. In some cases, the situation will have become worse."³⁷⁵ This is born out by the UNAIDS report, which cites a 17 year decrease in life expectancy in the Sub-Saharan countries worst affected by HIV/AIDS. Accepting that countries in the West have not been spared by the pandemic, the resulting global map of life expectancy places in stark relief HIV/AIDS' disproportionate impact in the developing world. Moreover, in overlaying the epidemiological map onto a geo-political map, Mbeki disrupts public health and medical discursive monopoly on HIV/AIDS.

He refracts Third World morbidity and mortality statistics by shifting the argument from the purely scientific and clinical to the political and economic. Mbeki enjoins the audience to

³⁷⁴ Ibid.(accessed).

rethink the explanations for the developing world's high levels of infant mortality. If 12.2 million children in the developing world die yearly from diseases that "could be prevented for just a few US cents per child," they die, he notes, "largely because of world indifference, but most of all [because] they are poor."³⁷⁶ To understand their deaths as simply the result of childhood infections is to neglect the implications of global inequalities. Sensitive to the unsettling quality of his inquiry, Mbeki, appealing to the values of tolerance and free exchange that define the Truth and Reconciliation atmosphere of the post-Apartheid South Africa, asks the audience's permission to speak frankly, to question the sacrosanct status of the dominant clinical narrative on HIV/AIDS. He further shores up his line of inquiry by invoking his responsibility as head of state. He avers that a "particular twist of South African history and the will of the great majority of our people, freely expressed have placed me in the situation in which I carry the title of President of the Republic of South Africa."³⁷⁷ He makes clear that his inquiry is thus motivated not merely by personal conviction, but by the collective need of South Africans to find the most effective means of addressing the epidemic.

Having made explicit the motives behind his line of

³⁷⁵ Ibid.(accessed).

³⁷⁶ Ibid.(accessed).

inquiry, he asks, "are safe sex, condoms and antiretroviral drugs sufficient responses to the health catastrophe we face."³⁷⁸ He answers by extrapolating from his earlier remarks. It follows, he argues, that if "extreme poverty is the world's biggest killer," any attempt at understanding the epidemic must account for the role of poverty. He refutes the mono-causal doctrine by noting, "we could not blame everything on a single virus." Poverty must be considered a co-factor in the complex matrix of variables responsible for AIDS. He illustrates the complicity of poverty and HIV in the syndrome, commenting:

one of the consequences of this crisis [health crisis resulting from malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, and a host of other factors] is the deeply disturbing phenomenon of the collapse of immune systems among millions of our people, such that their bodies have no natural defense against attack by many viruses and bacteria.³⁷⁹

Hence, if the pandemic is to be successfully managed, the global community must address "poverty, suffering, social disadvantage and inequity," as constitutive elements of the crisis.³⁸⁰

Responses to Mbeki's presentation were far from laudatory. They fall into two groups. The first, constituted by scientists and clinicians, understood Mbeki's assertions as blatant and dangerous disregard for established scientific truth. The second,

³⁷⁷ Ibid.(accessed).

³⁷⁸ Ibid.(accessed).

³⁷⁹ Ibid.(accessed).

populated by HIV activists and drug corporations, argued that his dismissal of HIV as the “necessary and sufficient factor in the development of AIDS” and his seeking of treatment modalities other than AZT and foreign manufactured anti-retroviral drugs as “grave criminal and genocidal misconduct.”³⁸¹

The most immediate and direct response to Mbeki's address came from the medical community in a document titled “The Durban Declaration: A Declaration by Scientists and Physicians Affirming HIV is the Cause of AIDS.” This manifesto, signed by 5,000 scientists and physicians, sought to reaffirm the medical narrative of HIV/AIDS. It states: “[t]he evidence that AIDS is caused by HIV-1 or HIV-2 is clear-cut, exhaustive and unambiguous. The evidence meets the highest standards of science.”³⁸² It renders transparent the alarm occasioned by Mbeki's speech. The Declaration's re-enactment of the scientific genre evinces the extent of the disquiet. The signers of the Declaration began by affirming the “highest standard of science” that enabled scientists to conclude that HIV causes AIDS. Moreover, they felt it necessary to re-enact the story of causation. The Durban Declaration reads like a scientific treatise on HIV. It begins by establishing the reality of infectious diseases, noting that AIDS “like many other diseases

³⁸⁰ Ibid.(accessed).

³⁸¹ Ibid.(accessed).

such as tuberculosis and malaria”³⁸³ is spread through infection. To clear any misunderstanding, the Declaration formulates a detailed list of vector transmission going back to the relationship between rodents and the plague. The resulting epidemiological construct allows for a re-enactment of the link between HIV-1, HIV-2, and their simian hosts.

Scripted as a scientific narrative, the story of the “zoonic hop,” however, betrays the limits of the genre. It exposes the ontopolitical structure that sustains the mapping of the HIV transmission. The Declaration states:

HIV-1, the retrovirus that is responsible for the AIDS pandemic, is closely related to a simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) which infects chimpanzees. HIV-2, which is prevalent in West Africa and has spread to Europe and India, is almost indistinguishable from an SIV that infects sooty mangabey monkeys.³⁸⁴

While this passage aims at explicating the scientific, it crosses over into the “populist” identification of Africa as the locus of the HIV virus. It echoes *Outbreak’s* homology between Motaba (read Ebola), simians, jungles, and Africa(ns). The Declaration makes the connection between Africa and HIV concrete not solely through the reliance on zoonoses - isolating both HIV-1 and HIV-2 to African hosts - but by explicitly mapping the spread of HIV-2.

³⁸² “The Durban Declaration,” *Nature* 406 (2000): 15.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Asserting that HIV-2 is a strain prevalent in West Africa, it makes a logical leap when it argues that HIV-2 migrated from West Africa to Europe and India.

The scientific community's response stands out not only for the speed with which it was generated, but also for the vehemence of its assertions. The Durban Declaration ends with the unambiguous affirmation that "HIV causes AIDS," adding that "it is unfortunate that a few vocal people continue to deny the evidence. This position will cost countless lives."³⁸⁵ It makes no effort to address Mbeki's inclusion of poverty and global inequality as ineluctable co-factors in HIV/AIDS. The Declaration's response is all the more remarkable for its focus, not to say obsession, on Mbeki's purported rejection of the etiology of AIDS. For nowhere in Mbeki's speech or in his pronouncements prior to the Conference does he negate that HIV is the etiologic agent of AIDS. Quite the reverse, in his remarks, "Mbeki consistently referred to the disease as 'HIV/AIDS,' clearly making the connection between the virus and the syndrome."³⁸⁶ Moreover, Mbeki's inclusion of poverty and inequality among the variables that contribute to the spread of HIV and to the syndrome's increased lethality among the poor is neither new nor heretic. As Paul Farmer notes, "there is no need

³⁸⁵ Ibid.: 16.

³⁸⁶ Paul Farmer, "Aids Heretic," *New Internationalist*,

to excommunicate the man for pointing out the obvious – that inequality is the major co-factor in this epidemic, as in most epidemics. And that inequality's origins are neither fated nor mysterious.”³⁸⁷ Reactions to Mbeki's speech must therefore be understood as an attempt by the scientific community to reaffirm its will to truth and, consequently, to preserve the global juridical structure that relegates the Other to bare life.

Ironically, while the West sought to discredit Mbeki, accusing him of participating in genocide, South Africa was engaged in a protracted battle with Western pharmaceutical companies over the prohibitive prices of HIV/AIDS drugs. In the United States, since the mid 1980s, advances in antiretroviral drug therapy have dramatically altered the public's perception and relationship to the disease. The U.S. no longer has HIV/AIDS patients, but persons living with HIV/AIDS. This semantic repositioning holds that HIV/AIDS is not a de facto death sentence, but a chronic disease to be managed by antiretroviral cocktails. This change is also evinced by the disease's visual semiotics. No longer is the person with HIV/AIDS in the United States represented as the gaunt, dying young man of films like *Philadelphia*. The popular iconography of the American living with the syndrome is the healthy superstar. He is Bill T. Jones and

January/February 2001, 2.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 5.

Magic Johnson, living and thriving in spite of the virus. Ever attentive to shifting visual fields, the drug industry has capitalized on this iconographic makeover. Advertisements for HIV drugs, targeted at upwardly mobile gay men, depict the HIV/AIDS patient as a "robust individual engaged in strenuous activity."³⁸⁸ They portray anti-retrovirals as lifestyle drugs akin to Propecia and Viagra.³⁸⁹

In the developing world, the climate is less hospitable for the HIV/AIDS patient. The patient in China, India, and Africa is neither robust nor does she live with HIV/AIDS. The language reserved for HIV/AIDS sufferers in the developing world bars them from qualified life. While in First World "populations are *affected* and locations are AIDS-*infected*, in the Third World populations are *devastated* and locations are AIDS-*infested*."³⁹⁰ Theirs is not the same disease as that affecting bourgeois Euro-America. The epidemiological/clinical language used to describe "African AIDS," for example, naturalizes the epidemic. It robs Africa(ns) of the bourgeois prerogatives of choice and agency, which reduces Africa(ns) to a "bundle of drives, but not of

³⁸⁸ Daryl Lindsey, *The 'Joel Camel' Ads of Aids?*(www.salon.com, 2001, accessed May 11 2001); available from www.salon.com/news/feature/2001/05/08/drug_ads/index.html.

³⁸⁹ Increased protest from AIDS activist, who argue that these adverts are contributing to the rise of HIV infections, prompted the FDA in April 2001 to order pharmaceutical companies to change the way they advertise HIV drugs.

³⁹⁰ Paula A. Treichler, "Aids, Africa, and Cultural Theory,"

capacities."³⁹¹ This, in no small measure, explains the West's apathy to the epidemic in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World. While there is no consensus about the actual numbers of persons infected with the HIV virus in Sub-Saharan Africa, few would deny that the epidemic threatens the Continent's future. This is especially so since the demographic impact of AIDS is felt most keenly among the age groups on whose shoulders lie Africa's future. In countries like Botswana, for example, the lifetime risk of AIDS death for 15-year-old boys is about 90%. Although inflated, a loss of half that number would bring any country to its knees. To this, the First World responds not with a statement of humanitarian crisis, but, as in the United States, by declaring AIDS a national security threat and mobilizing its forces to protect the interests of its pharmaceutical companies.

In 1997, the South African government, reacting to Western pharmaceutical companies' refusal to reduce drug prices, enacted a law granting South African pharmaceutical companies the right to seek sources of low-priced drugs to combat the growing epidemic.³⁹² The law incorporated two overlapping provisions. First, it encouraged companies to pursue parallel imports. It removed barriers to companies seeking to take advantage of market

Transition, no. 51 (1991): 88.

³⁹¹ Mbembe, 26.

³⁹² Bob Davis, "U.S., South Africa End Trade Battle over Aids Drugs," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 20 1999, 6.

price differentials by purchasing drugs from the cheapest-priced distributor without the patent holder's express permission. Second, the law permitted the compulsory licensing of drugs. This proviso fostered the licensing for local manufacture of generic drugs, a long-standing practice in Brazil and India. Although neither provision violated international trade agreements, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (Pharma) argued that the law infringed on international patent protections. Pharma urged the United States, through the office of Vice President Gore, then co-chairman of the U.S.-South African bi-national commission, to pressure South Africa into repealing the law. Appealing to U.S. laws covering unfair trade practices, Pharma lobbied Congress to initiate retaliatory policies to bring South Africa into compliance. Chief among these mechanisms was the addition of South Africa to the "watch list" of countries that violate intellectual property rights, which promised to ravage foreign direct investments in the country. In addition, the Republican congressman from New Jersey, Rodney Frelinghuyen, attached a provision to the South African foreign aid bill blocking aid to the country unless it abrogated the law.³⁹³ For a country in the process of rebuilding itself after the long and debilitating history of apartheid,

³⁹³ Charles R. Babcock, "Aids Activists Dog Gore a 2nd Day," *The Washington Post*, June 18 1999, A12.

these sanctions boded disaster.

Under pressure from ACT UP and from the Congressional Black Caucus, Gore changed his position. His turn around was not inspired by an appreciation of the crisis facing South Africa, but by the need to preserve two constituencies without which he could not succeed in his bid for office. ACT UP's unrelenting protest was beginning to erode his standing among gay voters. At every campaign stop, he faced protesters yielding signs that read "Gore's greed kills." Coterminous with ACT UP's protest, Gore faced a public letter authored by Eleanor Homes Norton, the congressional delegate for the District of Columbia, and co-signed by the Black Caucus. The letter, identifying with the plight of South Africans, demanded that the Vice President take immediate steps to ameliorate the situation. Gore, who well understood the history linking Africa-Americans to South Africa, and, more importantly, his need of African America votes in the November 2000 election, responded a day after receiving the letter by announcing his support for South Africa's pursuit of cheaper anti-retroviral medicines. Ever the politician, and not wanting to disaffect Pharma and other manufacturers concerned about property rights, Gore added a qualification to his support. He supported South Africa's pursuits "so long as they are done in a way consistent with international agreements." This, in effect, removed the federal government from the debates, even as it left

Pharma free to pursue its legal action.

On September 9, 1999, Pharma discontinued its lawsuit against South Africa.³⁹⁴ The pharmaceutical companies dropped the proceedings not out of altruism, but out of recognition that their position was becoming untenable. The writing on the wall came when President Bill Clinton declared AIDS "a national and global security threat," and signed an Executive Order "conceding that African nations can use generic AIDS drugs rather than patented products from US-based companies."³⁹⁵ Clinton and his advisors reasoned that the epidemic has the potential to destabilize governments, and, therefore, demanded immediate action from the United States. Vice President Gore echoed the President's stance before the United Nations noting: "the heart of the security agenda is protecting lives - and we now know that the number of people who will die in the first decade of the 21st century will rival the number that died in all the wars in all the decades of the 20th century."³⁹⁶ Not everyone in Congress, however, embraced this position. The Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott, argued that the Vice President's and the President's stances were calculated to gain electoral support. After all, he

³⁹⁴ Neil A. Lewis, "U.S. Industry to Drop Aids Drug Lawsuit against South Africa," *The New York Times*, 10 September 1999, 3.

³⁹⁵ Phyllida Brown, "Cheaper Aids Drugs Due for the Third World," *Nature*, 18 May 2000, 263.

³⁹⁶ *Clinton Administration Declares Aids a Security Threat*, (CNN.com, 2000, accessed April 30 2000); available from

asserted, AIDS might be a threat to the security of African countries, but it is not a threat to "our national security."

Pharma's and the West's unwillingness to help developing countries in their struggles against the social and economic burdens of the AIDS epidemic belie the naïve conception of globalization as a smoothing of spaces and differences. The denial of anti-retroviral drugs where it is most needed reveals a global order wherein Africans, among others, do not register above the level of bare life. It participates in a narrative that locates disease elsewhere and articulates the Western self as a negation of the Other. Pharma's pursuit of profit at the cost of millions of lives can thus be easily understood; for in the confrontation between qualified and bare life, the death of Africans do not amount to murder. Similarly, the controversies over President Thabo Mbeki's policies, whether or not one embraces their wisdom, are productive for they render transparent the West's medicalization of difference. His refusal to embrace the West's medical catechism, which would replace the global as a political and economic matrix for a field of imagined immunities, calls our attention to the lingering legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism. In his discourse, HIV is not simply an agent of disease, but a symptom of global inequalities. It does not

divide us into insular nation-states, but traces our interconnections, our being-in-common in a wider global field.

Conclusion: From New Jersey with Love

The events of September 11, 2001 have telescoped the West's, especially the United States', civilizational meaning practices. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the U. S. sought to mobilize the country and justify its actions against the Taliban and Al Qaeda by calling on the function of history as traumatic memory. Newspaper and television reports reached back to the history of the Second World War and gave new life to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Ignoring the comparison's obvious shortfalls, the attack on Pearl Harbor became an overarching signifier. Others, like President Bush, sought grander historical perspectives. In an address to the nation, Bush compared the United States' "war on terrorism" to the Crusades: it is a holy war, a religious confrontation of good versus evil. Whatever the historical scale of the comparisons, they share a Manichean understanding of the world. In the words of Tod Lindberg, editor of *Policy Review*, foreign governments are "either with us and against the terrorists, or against us and with them."

The comparisons' Manichean drive renders transparent their

anxiety about identity. In the weeks and months after the attack, Muslim-Americans became prime targets of racist assaults. The obsessional, not to say racist, fixation on identifying Muslims from America's citizens arcs back to the Cold War's Red Scare. For much as with the House Un-American Activities Committee, what drives the "war on terrorism" is the fear of non-recognition. This fear surfaces in all modes of discourse. It is most acutely manifest in the notion of Homeland Security. Contrary to the traditional roles of state and federal policing agencies, the task of the Homeland Agency exceeds the fight against crime. It is charged with safeguarding the nation against its internal enemies. Its duty is to fight "the forces of invisibility," to use Salman Rushdie's infelicitous term.³⁹⁷ That is, it seeks to disambiguate the citizen from the foreigner/traitor. In this, it uncomfortably shares in Apartheid South Africa's Homeland agency's mission to keep the Other at a safe distance from the national.

In this climate of insecurity, bio-terrorism has assumed center stage. The fear that Osama bin Laden's agents and others blinded by their hate of the U.S. would seek to infect the country with smallpox or anthrax has captured the public's imagination. For weeks after September 11, army supply stores

³⁹⁷ Salman Rushdie, "Fighting the Forces of Invisibility," *The Washington Post*, 2 October 2001, A25.

could not stock enough gas masks and other protective gear. Physicians and pharmacies found themselves awash in requests for Cipro. Caught in the excitement, Tom Brokaw signed off the evening news by pronouncing, "In Cipro We Trust." The climate of hysteria contributed to a further rearticulation of national boundaries. All those with a foreign accent and darker skin color were suspected of carrying deadly agents and demanded strict surveillance.

Ironically, in the midst of this paranoia, the anthrax letters began arriving in New York, Florida, and D.C. More than confirming the public's fears, the letters reveal the nation to be a fractuous and fictive construct, which resists all attempts at fixity. The epistolary form is central to the construction of contemporaneity. It is a necessary element in the formation of nationhood and citizenship as spatial and temporal co-presence. However, the anthrax letters' spread of "epistolary pestilence" exposed the form's participation in a being-not-at-one with the nation. This is all the more so given the letters' place of origin. They were not mailed from Iraq or some "rogue" state, but from were postmarked Trenton, NJ. The Trenton postmark made suspect all attempts at exteriorizing danger. Danger was now everywhere. Moreover, the United States' responded to the possibility of an anthrax outbreak by soliciting large quantities of Cipro from Bayer Pharmaceuticals at discounted prices. When

Bayer refused, the United States government, contrary to its earlier stance on South Africa, threatened to license Cipro for generic manufacture at home.³⁹⁸ The argument had come full circle.

³⁹⁸ See, Sharon Lerner, "The Bayer Boondoggle," *The Village Voice*, 7-13 November 2001.

CHAPTER 5

OF MULTICOLORED GHOSTS AND POLYGLOT AVATARS: THE RESTRUCTURING OF
THE POST-COLONIAL DISCURSIVE SPACE IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE CALCUTTA
CHROMOSOME*

The Third World migrant finds himself between a cosmopolitanism inspired by an imperial imaginary and an increasingly medicalized Western nationalism. These poles both embrace and reject the migrant. While gesturing to a smoothing of spaces, cosmopolitanism enacts a discourse that arrests the migrant in a hierarchy of cultural differences. Though no longer dependant upon a vertical conception of movement, cosmopolitanism has not abandoned the connection between movement and knowledge. It is governed by a conception of knowledge that places the migrant in a marginal position to the "post-national," globalized world. Put differently, the West is cosmopolitan only insofar as it understands its culture to be the final step in a historical movement. Hence, Western cosmopolitanism does not celebrate globalization as flows that breed differences, but seeks to discipline the proliferation of differences through colonial inspired racial and spatial hierarchies. It is this relationship to difference that explains the simultaneous celebration of a cosmopolitan present and the rejection of the migrant evinced in discourses about the superbug. The anxiety and fear of the

superbug exhibited in the Ebola and HIV, illustrate how movements of Third World migrants remain secondary to Western flows of capital and commodity.

Cosmopolitanism and the medicalization of national difference reinstate the nation as a locus of identity. Against this recuperative movement stand the works of postcolonial writers. Though by no means exclusively focused on the nation, the nation and its discontents are central to the imagination of postcolonial writers. Kwame Appiah, for example, illustrates the importance of the nation to the Third World imaginary by mapping the reactions of postcolonial writers to anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalist movements.³⁹⁹ The works of postcolonial writers are not, however, mere political and social barometers. They are integral to the negotiation of imagined communities. This explains the appropriation of postcolonial works both at home and abroad.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is such an example.⁴⁰⁰ Since its publication in 1958, the novel has assumed a canonical position in Nigerian and American academic curriculum. In the United States, the continued use of *Things Fall Apart* as a historic document attests not only to a particular academic bent

³⁹⁹ See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 149-155.

⁴⁰⁰ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

that sees the postcolonial writers as cultural informants, but also resonates with Achebe's contention that the writer is, first and foremost, a teacher.⁴⁰¹ In this articulation, the writer is not merely a witness to historical events, but a contributor to the imagining and construction of his time.

In *Atlas of the European Novel*, Franco Moretti remarks that "specific stories are the product of specific spaces," and that "without a certain kind of space, a certain kind of story is simply impossible."⁴⁰² He suggests that European novels, especially French and British, possess unique spatial signatures. Their imaginative scapes reflect the spaces of exchange that define their respective historical periods. Moretti's assertions bind novelists, as cultural workers, to their historical time. His historical anchoring is applicable to individual novelists as well as the novelistic genre. As Bakhtin suggests,

The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinction . . . The chronotope as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments* (London Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1988).

⁴⁰² Moretti, 100.

⁴⁰³ Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 85.

The chronotope allows us to push Moretti's analysis beyond the negotiation of national boundaries. For if the novel participates in the imagining of boundaries as a response to established patterns of exchange, these patterns also influence the novelist's conception of time and space. That is, the chronotope is a "product of specific kinds of spaces." The novel thus animates and is animated by a confluence of unique epistemic and hermeneutic traditions that are themselves historically contingent. It is in this dual sense that one might read novelists and their works as cultural and political nodes that reflect and refract the preoccupations of their time and location.

The modernist novel's teleology, for example, illustrates the genre's participation in the preoccupation of its time. The novel emerges, in the modernist context, as a field in which enlightenment rationality unfolds. This is evidenced by the continued importance of "the plot" as an organizing principle and as a mode of criticism. The modernist novel's "rationalization of the world," however, interdicts not only those whose chronotopes depend on non-Cartesian time and space, but it challenges writers who seek to transcend the nation-state as the locus of critique. Herder illustrates this challenge when he offers drama as a counter to enlightenment's search for a universal history. He argues that "a people will wherever possible invent its drama

according to its own history, spirit of the times, customs, language, national biases, traditions, and inclinations."⁴⁰⁴ While his resistance to a universal history is productive, his use of drama as texts that map the history of "a people" limits the novel's usefulness as a medium of postnational critique. That is, though Herder seeks a counter to the reductionism of cosmopolitan histories, he remains trapped in a binarism that places national histories in opposition to cosmopolitan histories.

As products of a unique conjunction of time and space, the works of postcolonial writers are instructive terrains for an inquiry into emerging political and identity responses to the double bind of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. In the past decades, postcolonial writers have surfaced as celebrated imaginative writers. What attracts readers, postcolonial and Western alike, to postcolonial writers is that they are not only keenly aware of the political and social problems of the present, but, because of their positions, navigating the in-between of the West and the Rest, they have produced imaginative maps that offer great insights into a relational mode of being that transcends the strict domains of nationalism or cosmopolitanism.

⁴⁰⁴Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*, trans. Maria Bunge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 151.

In this chapter, I use postcolonial literature to suggest that Third World writers have long enacted imaginative constructions that seek to clear a space for conceptions of being that are not anchored on the space and temporality of the nation. This is particularly the case of postcolonial magical realism. The use of the fantastic in postcolonial literature lends to images of the self that transcend the national and provide new chronotopes through which to imagine a relational being that resists sedimentation into radical alterity. Thus I begin my reading with Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Tutuola's work is an important point of entry into Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* not only because it is one of the first exemplary uses of the fantastic in Third World literature, but, more importantly, because it uses non-Western chronotopes to articulate a conception of the contact zone as a space of entanglement that is central to *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Departing from *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, I read *The Calcutta Chromosome* alongside the frontier novels of Larry McMurtry and Walter Mosley to explore how space and identity are represented in these works. I argue that *The Calcutta Chromosome*, by avoiding the limitations of the blues detective genre and by challenging both the discursive and hermeneutic aspects of the detective genre, constructs radically new and contingent

identities and modes of being-in-the-world that escape cosmopolitan and the statist affirmations.

Amos Tutuola and the Metaphysics of the Bush

For the non-West, the nation is a place of Othering. While it shares with the West in its blueprint of power, the nation, in the Third World, is a location where the historical and cultural structures of the modern are inculcated on the Other. It is therefore an arena wherein the postcolonial negotiates modernist identity practices and constructs ways of being that escape the state's carceral function. Much as in the West, the novel is a dominant vehicle in this negotiation. Postcolonial writers' use of the magical and the fantastic challenge both the modernist novel's teleology and its purported function as a vessel of national histories. The spaces engendered by these texts render the complexity of encounters visible.

The novels and short stories of Amos Tutuola are powerful examples of this function. Tutuola, a Yoruba writer, began his career as a novelist in the 1940s with his first manuscript, *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts*. Tutuola's manuscript was not published. In a move that would become synonymous with the criticism of Tutuola's works, a British publisher bought the manuscript not for its literary merit, but for its curious

aggregation of ghost stories. Tutuola published his first novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Palm-Wine Tapster in the Dead's Town*, in 1952. The critics' responses to the novel are telling. They reveal the literary establishment's encounter with a genre that defied its critical conventions, forcing it to resort to a colonial architectonic in its responses. This is evident in remarks about the novel's "young English" and in attempts to fix it at the intersection of orality and literature.

The critics' difficulty in locating *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* within an established genre results from Amos Tutuola's introduction of new chronotopes. *The Palm Wine-Drinkard* reworks well known West African tales, with a decidedly original stamp, to recount the adventures of an "expert palm-wine drinkard," a man who daily drank one hundred and fifty kegs of palm-wine, and who, after the death of his palm-wine tapster, searches for him in Dead's Town. The novel's mixture of Western and African narrative forms gives rise to new chronotopes that disrupt established African and Western literary genres. These new chronotopes challenged and continue to challenge many of Tutuola's critics. We find a contemporary illustration of this unease in James Snead's analysis of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Snead summarizes the novel as

the quest-narrative of a disembodied "I," through both physical and cultural terrains. In his astute and humorous mixing of African and European

reference points – such as linking 'juju' with that all too English cliché 'one fine morning' – Tutuola both plays with and against the expectations of African and European readers.⁴⁰⁵

The Palm-Wine Drinkard cyborgian being illustrates Snead's reading of Tutuola's "mixing of African and European" viewpoints. While traveling through the bush, the Palm-Wine Drinkard and his wife confront a being that is as much a cyborg as it is an *Egugun*. Its body is an assemblage of modern and traditional technologies; it possesses television limbs and a telephone voice; raffia, wood, and glass beads make up its head and torso. This mixture of technologies and materials renders the being's body into a symbolic terrain of encounter between the West and the non-West. It is neither African nor European, but the embodiment of the tensions that define the "contact zone." The being's body resists the inauguration of a new, hybrid technology of being, but rather dwells in the tensions of the in-between.⁴⁰⁶

Snead's analysis, however, misapprehends the Palm-Wine Drinkard's quest. Contrary to Snead's reading, Palm-Wine Drinkard's quest is not that of a disembodied "I." Snead's reading fails to appreciate the novel's chronotopes when he places the novel's cultural scapes in tension with its rational

⁴⁰⁵ James Snead, "European Pedigrees/African Contagions: Nationality, Narrative, and Community in Tutuola, Achebe, and Reed," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990), 240.

⁴⁰⁶ See Alfred Arteaga, ed., *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity*

scapes. Consider the bush. As the terrain of the ghostly and the fantastic, the bush magnifies and distorts the colonial encounter. It is a zone of symbolic exchange. Tutuola focuses on the bush's symbolic power in his account of how the Palm-Wine Drinkard's wife is drawn into the bush. The Palm-Wine Drinkard's wife, a market woman, falls under the spell of a handsome man she meets in the market. The stranger's physical beauty is so compelling that, on instinct, she follows him out of the market and into the bush. After the stranger enters the bush, he begins to disassemble his body, returning its various parts to their owners. She finds herself the victim of a skull who periodically rents body parts from other ghosts to attend the market in search of prey. This anecdote is both a moral tale about the superficiality of beauty and an exposé on the colonial contact zone's rampant commercialism.

In the bush, commerce is not, however, limited to the material. The bush is a space where exchange reigns and everything has a value.⁴⁰⁷ The palm-wine drinkard recounts:

Now by that time and before we entered inside the white tree, we had 'sold our death' to somebody for the sum of £70: 18: 16d and 'lent our fear' to

In the Linguistic Borderlands (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

⁴⁰⁷For a discussion of symbolic economies see Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

somebody at the door as well on interest of £3:
10: 0d per month. . .⁴⁰⁸

What is noteworthy here is not simply that the protagonist and his wife trade on such concepts as fear, but what the focus on exchange accomplishes. In structuring the bush as a complex field of material and symbolic exchanges, Tutuola amasses a critique of colonialist and neocolonialist exploitation that is not dependant on the nation-state as its locus of enunciation. He transforms the bush into "combat zones of meaning."⁴⁰⁹ Much like Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* creates a new language that expresses "the form of interdependence and the undifferentiated in the white/black relationship: cultural entanglements."⁴¹⁰ Tutuola's entanglement, unlike hybridity, is an active process, which accentuates the moments of cultural improvisation that are at the core of colonial and postcolonial encounters.

Moreover, Tutuola's is a pragmatic engagement with the colonial. It neither engages in the politics of hybridity, a politics that seeks to overcome the traumas of the colonial experience through a conscious suturing of the Western and non-Western, nor does it dwell in discussions about the writer's

⁴⁰⁸Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1953), 67.

⁴⁰⁹Ileana Rodríguez, *House/Garden/Nation* (Durham [N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 102.

⁴¹⁰*Ibid.*, 119.

ability "to make the borrowed tongues carry the weight of [our] African experiences."⁴¹¹ Tutuola's genius resides in his lack of concern for English's ability to carry his experiences. His writings are bricolages informed by the material and symbolic trappings of his life-world, a world populated as much by tree ghosts as by cyborgs. Tutuola's conceptual universe has no room for debates about authenticity. His stance is consonant with Appiah's remarks about the life of most Africans. Appiah writes:

All aspects of contemporary African cultural life – including music and some sculpture and painting, even some writing with which the West is largely not familiar – have been influenced, often powerfully, by the transition of African societies through colonialism, but they are not all in the relevant sense postcolonial . . . indeed it might be said to be the mark of popular culture that its borrowing from international cultural forms are remarkably insensitive to – not so much dismissive of as blind to – the issue of neocolonialism or "cultural imperialism."⁴¹²

To reframe Appiah's reading of African popular culture, I would suggest that popular culture, writ large, is informed far less by an explicit borrowing than it is by exchange. That is, popular cultural expressions in Africa or Europe are the results, as Tutuola makes clear, of a labyrinthine process of exchanges and influences that belie any attempt at constructing simple national or universal maps.

⁴¹¹Ibid., 7.

⁴¹² Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of*

The movements of characters and commodities that mark Amos Tutuola's bush have been accelerated by the post-imperium. The global forces of dislocation have occasioned movements and connections that expand the postcolonial contact zone beyond the margins of the colonial nation-state. However, this nomadic contact zone has not displaced the imperial recuperative drive that returns the postcolonial Other to the disciplining technologies of the nation. Tutuola's vision of the bush is pushed further by this emerging climate. Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* picks up where Tutuola's trail ends. Ghosh's use of the bush's narrative elements creates a conception of spaces and times that gesture to relational presences that resist the politics of identity, thereby offering a postcolonial metaphysics of the bush.

In a Feverish State

Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* was met with similar responses as Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Unlike the latter, the dilemma that faced the reviewers of *The Calcutta Chromosome* was not where to place the novel in the trajectory linking orality to literacy, but on which genre to locate the novel. The inability of reviewers and critics to agree on a

classificatory locus for the novel is witnessed in their descriptions of the novel. They have variously classified *The Calcutta Chromosome* as a mystery novel, a “postcolonial experimental” novel, and a science fiction novel. The novel’s resistance to generic attribution offers a prismatic opening into contemporary responses to the instability of the nation-state.

The classificatory difficulty stems, in part, from Ghosh’s use of malaria in the novel. At a first reading, *The Calcutta Chromosome* is the story of Muragan’s pursuit of the truth about Ronald Ross’s purported discovery of the causes and modes of transmission of malaria. The novel does not, however, limit itself to Muragan’s search nor does it stop with *plasmodium falciparum malaria* as a subject of scientific inquiry. What distinguishes *The Calcutta Chromosome* is its use of malaria or, more accurately, the delirium of malarial fever as a narrative technique. As I noted above, Amos Tutuola’s use of the bush and of Yoruba mythology produces chronotopes that allow him to effect a critique of colonial and neocolonial environments. Similarly, Ghosh’s use of malaria lends to *The Calcutta Chromosome* the quality of a fever induced delirium, a feverish state where temporal and spatial categories as well as the very concept of the “real” are disrupted. Ghosh’s narrative technique results in a surrealist dreamscape where borders between concepts and spaces are rendered porous, allowing characters to move easily from one

dimension to the next. The novel's characters exist in a state wherein the barriers between the past and the present, here and there are fluid. The novel's internal landscape thus mirrors the confusion it produces in its critics. The difficulty in placing the novel can be attributed to a number of factors. Chief among these is its free flow across generic lines.

While *The Calcutta Chromosome* functions within and contributes to the spatial and temporal dislocations that are the fare of postcolonial fiction, Ghosh takes a novel approach to dislocation. Like many of his counterparts, he isolates the city as the exemplary locus of movement. *The Calcutta Chromosome* reads as a study of the city as a node in the exchanges that define modern and late-modern nation-states. The city emerges in the novel as the space of migrancy. New York city - this is equally true of Cairo or Calcutta - is the city of the "Sudanese bank-teller, the well-dressed Guyanese woman . . . the young Bangladeshi man."⁴¹³ It thrives in a polyphonic and multiethnic mix that welcomes in its flux characters whose biographies are *tableaux vivant* of movement and dislocation.

In this polyphonic mix, *The Calcutta Chromosome* introduces the reader to Antar, the novel's aging protagonist, who, like Ghosh, is emblematic of the city's new inhabitants. Born in

⁴¹³Amitav Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery* (New York: Avon Books, 1997), 13.

rural Egypt and trained at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, he lives in late twenty first century New York city. His is a city defined as much by cultural sprawl as it is by physical, architectural sprawl. Antar inhabits a world in which dislocation is far from a purely spatial phenomenon. Non-spatial dislocation is not, however, late-modern condition alone. For insofar as colonialism is a process of violent encounter, the colonizer and the colonized are faced with a radical process of cultural and linguistic dislocation. Postcolonial writers' use of languages other than their mother tongues highlights the extent of this dislocation. If we accept the Calibanic argument that language is one of the primary vectors employed by the colonizers to establish their cultural superiority, language surfaces as one of the primary vehicles of cultural dislocation. It becomes the mirror that distorts the reflection of the colonized, occasioning a form of non-spatial movement. Novelistic examples of non-spatial movement abound. Salman Rushdie's most recent novel, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, is a compelling example.⁴¹⁴ In this novel, Rushdie uses rock-and-roll, articulated in the romance of Ormus Carma and Vina Apsara, to delineate the trajectories of a world no longer bound by stable borders. Rock-and-roll, a musical form rooted in the experiences

⁴¹⁴Salman Rushdie, *The Ground beneath Her Feet* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999).

of African-Americans and blue-collar laborers, transcends, through radio and record sales, the limits of the spaces and cultures responsible for its emergence. It becomes, in short order, as much the music of Detroit and Liverpool as the music of Calcutta and Kinshasa. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* does not dwell in fictive connections and trajectories, nor are the lines of flow it traces simply products of late-modernity's hyper-commercialism. Rather, it retraces the cultural and linguistic flows forged in the crucible of the colonial "contact zone."

In contrast to Tutuola's bush, the "contact zone," as a locus of encounter, is the space where the colonial will-to-power is most clearly manifested. As Wole Soyinka writes in *Death and the King's Horseman*, the "contact zone" is not a space of simultaneous dislocation; it does not stage "a clash of cultures."⁴¹⁵ Rather, it is the field on which the West imposes its will, occasioning a profound cultural and linguistic dislocation in the colonized. It is in this orchestration of the self, both by the colonized and by the colonizer, that Ghosh's novel inserts itself. Although it fully participates in the construction of non-spatial dislocations, *The Calcutta Chromosome* assumes a different posture toward the debate. It accesses the dislocation occasioned by encounter through a different

⁴¹⁵Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, 5.

technology, a mixture of malarial fever and artificial intelligence. The novel's protagonist, Antar, works for the International Water Council as a programmer and analyst. He is entrusted by the Council with the duty of correcting problems occasioned by the inability of the artificially intelligent (AI) computer, Ava, to identify and correctly catalogue items it retrieves from "those routine inventories that went flashing around the globe with metronomic regularity."⁴¹⁶ Antar's interaction with Ava fosters a continuous encounter that dislodges sedimented conceptions of the self, and moves us to rethink how we understand the dynamics of encounter.

Through the use of AI, *The Calcutta Chromosome* disrupts statist conceptions of identity by decoupling culture/language from geography. In the past few decades, the local has gained increased conceptual power as a harbor against perceived assaults from the processes of globalization. It is presented as a category of being that preserves discreet boundaries and hence operates as a marker of authenticity. It serves as a membership card that endows its holder with a sense of belonging. Ghosh presents a line of flight from this concept of belonging in Ava. He contracts the super computer's name, AVA/IIe, into Ava. This contraction is not accidental. In doing so, Ghosh accomplishes a

⁴¹⁶Ghosh, 3.

metonymic relationship between Ava and avatar. That is, Ava, to which the narrator refers by the female pronoun, forces a confrontation not only AI technology, but the disruptive quality of the virtual. In virtual reality environments, the avatar is the embodied representation of a user, a virtual being to whom one responds "as if" the representation is "real." The instantiation of the virtual is, however, informed by the suspicion that, more often than not, the connection between the avatar and the real is at best tenuous. The avatar is thus the embodiment of Sycorax.

Ava's uncanny ability to reproduce regional dialects in minute detail illustrates her ability to disrupt the link between language and national identity. The narrator notes:

Ever since she was programmed to simulate "localization" Ava had been speaking to him [Antar] in the appropriate rural dialect of the Nile Delta. Her voice-reproduction capabilities had been upgraded so that she could even switch intonations depending on what was being said . . . At times he had trouble following Ava. And then there were times when he would recognize the authorship of a long-forgotten relative in an unusual expression or characteristic turn of phrase.⁴¹⁷

Ava's polylocality challenge the conception of the local as geographically coherent linguistic and cultural practices. Insofar as the local draws a strict isomorphism between the

⁴¹⁷Ibid., 14.

geographical and the cultural-linguistic, *The Calcutta Chromosome's* invocation of Ava as a singular example of the polyglot renders linguistic and cultural practices movable. Lest we confine Ava and the resulting practice to the fictional alone, we ought to consider the implications of electronic media for Anderson's "Imagined Community." At its most innocuous, current changes in electronic media allows for cultural artifacts to be consumed without respect to borders.

The avatar's movement renders her into an exemplary mimic. It places us within a performative space where the tethers that bind us to gender, race, and the myriad of other markers that limit movement are loosened. Moreover, the avatar's performative ability, its ability to intone any accent and to duplicate the sounds and settings of a given place, questions the possibility of any real/authentic self outside of a network of mimetic acts. In effect, Ava transcends Naipaul's mimic man, opting for an interpretive structure wherein all identities are possible and true to the extent that they are at bottom syncretic and performative.⁴¹⁸

Moreover, the ability to move without physical dislocation unmoors the local from its geo-political imaginary, making it possible to maintain communities of values that are not dependant

⁴¹⁸V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967).

on geographical spaces. In disrupting the isomorphism between culture and geography, the "new localism" decouples the nation from the state, challenging post-coloniality's reliance on geopolitical metaphors. This is, for example, the case with the post-colonial dependance on diaspora as a concept that encapsulates the migrant's connection to home. While diaspora has a useful historical antecedent, it fails to capture the contemporary complexity of migrancy. The present experiences of migrants resemble neither the patterns nor the relationship of earlier generations of migrants to their places of origin.⁴¹⁹ The life world of contemporary migrant communities must be understood through a different reading of home. Home no longer stands as a bounded place where one shares in the historic, linguistic, and cultural life. Rather, the late-modern home is characterized as much by flux as it is by constancy. Home is perennial motion. Postcoloniality's reliance on diaspora thus participates in an antiquated referencing of spatial movement that serves less to elucidate than to preserve ossified identity categories. It participates in a mythic construction that limits the formation of progressive political and cultural affiliations, while reproducing such conceptual categories as race and nation-states.

⁴¹⁹For a novelistic treatment of this, see M.G. Vassanji, *No New Land* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991).

The Novel and the Passport

In challenging the local and national as sites of identity production, *The Calcutta Chromosome* also questions the technologies that produce individual identity narratives. The novel premises this interrogation on the interplay of the performative and the archival. As Roberto Echevarría notes in his study of the Latin American novel, meaning practices are invariably mythopoetic and archival. Commenting on Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*,⁴²⁰ he writes:

The blend of mythic elements and Latin American history in *Cien años de soledad* reveals a desire to found a Latin American myth as well as the voiding of the anthropological mediation. Latin American history is set on the same level as mythic stories; therefore, it too becomes a sort of myth.⁴²¹

Hence, insofar as they oscillate between statist practices of subjectification and the heterological construction of meaning, individual identity narratives similarly participate in the simultaneous act of archiving and mythopoesis. This is most pronounced in the various identification cards we carry around. Identification cards are at once instruments of the states' bio-

⁴²⁰Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (New York: Avon Books, 1971).

⁴²¹Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1998), 20.

power and an enunciation of myths of belonging,⁴²² masking the state's narrative violence by appealing to expediency and entitlement. Passports provide a poignant example. While functioning as a talisman of belonging and movement that enables its bearer the ability to cross borders, the passport simultaneously maintains the limits of a nationalist and statist discourse.⁴²³

Ghosh places Antar between mythopoetic and statist identity practices. As the narrator notes, Ava's archiving and processing of the Council's files are periodically interrupted by data, "trivial things," she cannot fit into her classificatory scheme. These disruptions result from Ava's encounter with the accouterments of individual lives necessitating biographical narratives to render them intelligible. Ava's inability to construct these stories requires that Antar assume the role of the storyteller-cum-archivist, bridging Ava's virtual world and the life-world of the International Water Council. She is the creator of links that are integral to the production of identity narratives. It is the production of these links that *The Calcutta Chromosome* interrogates.

⁴²²For a discussion of Michel Foucault's concept of subjectification and bio-power see, Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

⁴²³For a poetic treatment of the limitations and possibilities of the passport, see Amitava Kumar, *Passport Photos* (Los Angeles:

During one of her routine inventory sessions, Ava stalls while processing the remnants of an ID card. On closer inspection, the card turns out to belong to a coworker and old friend of Antar's, L. Murugan, who disappeared years earlier. Ghosh uses Murugan's identification card as catalyst in a moving study of identity construction. Antar's encounter with the remnants of Murugan's ID propels him to reconstruct the card both as a physical artifact and metaphor of Murugan's biography. With the help of Ava's archive, Antar begins to piece together the circumstances surrounding Murugan's disappearance. He recalls - in 1995, the year of Murugan's disappearance - Murugan's impassioned monologue on his pursuit of the truth about Ronald Ross's discovery of the mode of transmission of *falciparum malaria*. Murugan's obsession with the story of the British physician, poet, and 1902 Nobel Prize laureate began years earlier. While a graduate student at Syracuse, he developed a fascination with the medical history of malaria. It was this fascination that brought him to the story of Ronald Ross. Murugan's passion assumed a life of its own when he discovered that Ross's Nobel winning work had happened in the Summer of 1898, the year of Murugan's birth. This perceived biographical connection would set him on a lifelong pursuit.

Ghosh uses the biographical connection between Murugan and Ross not as a straightforward point of intersection between their two narratives, but to highlight the spuriousness of all identity constructs. This becomes manifest in Murugan's conviction that the sanctioned story of Ross's discovery masks more than it reveals. For while the annals of medical history portray Ross as the heroic, lone scientist battling the malaria germs against a scientific community hostile to his ideas, Murugan suspects that Ross had help along the way. He develops what he calls the "Other Mind" theory: "a theory that some person or persons had systematically interfered with Ronald Ross's experiments to push malaria research in certain directions while leading it away from others."⁴²⁴ He focuses particularly on a group of Indians whom he repeatedly encounters in his reading of journals and letters addressing the works of Ross and of his predecessors. This group, led by Mangala, is present at key moments in Ross's discoveries.

Mangala fascinates Murugan. Seeing her as biochemistry's version of Ramanujan, he suspects that Ronald Ross was less agent than pawn in his experiments. Murugan surmises that while dispensing treatment for *syphilitic paresis* Mangala had created a new strain of malaria with a curious side-effect; namely, that

⁴²⁴Ghosh, 37.

when this strain of malaria was transmitted from donor to recipient the "crossover of randomly associated personality traits" took place.⁴²⁵ Murugan calls the factor responsible for this "personality transposition" the Calcutta Chromosome. To pursue his theory first hand, he secures a transfer to Calcutta.

Murugan arrives in Calcutta, a city that differs radically from New York. Calcutta, like so many South Asian and Middle Eastern cities, has been the subject of countless Orientalist works of fiction and travel. The Calcutta represented in these narratives intensifies all of the qualities that define the Orientalist's Other. As Bayoumi writes:

[T]he modern European colonial city needed the existence of the dilapidated native city with its lack of European rational planning, to illustrate and perform the need for la mission civilisatrice.⁴²⁶

Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 *La Bataille d'Alger* powerfully illustrates Bayoumi's assertion. In a *cinéma-vérité* style that remains the model for the genre, *La Bataille d'Alger* chronicles the FLN's campaign against the French colonial forces in Algeria. Aside from its innovative cinematic technique, *La Bataille d'Alger* stands out for its use of architecture as *mise-en-scène*. Pontecorvo maps the armed conflict between Algerians and the

⁴²⁵Ibid., 249.

⁴²⁶Moustafa Bayoumi, "Shadows and Light: Colonial Modernity and the Grande Mosquée of Paris," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 13, no. 2

French through a montage that juxtapose the French colonial city to the Casbah. These scenes depict the French colonial quarter as embodying the rational, modernist ideal of city planning, possessing open boulevards lined by *grand magasin* and outdoor cafes inviting its citizen to participate in the colony's civic life. To the French quarter's boulevard, the Casbah offers narrow streets; to the colonial city's *grand magasin*, it offers white washed Moorish houses with heavy gates and wooden shutters, which not only separated the domestic space from "the life of the street," but close off the Casbah from French aesthetic and rationality. The Casbah negates the Western conception of modern life as "the life of the street," which "had to be open, visible, and demonstrative of the new social order of the day."⁴²⁷ Pontecorvo further endows these architectural differences with a metaphorical function. Through a series of tracking shots he follows the movement of veiled Arab women against the backdrop of the Casbah, establishing a homology between the Casbah's architecture and the veil.⁴²⁸ *La Bataille d'Alger* foregrounds both

(2000): 267.

⁴²⁷Ibid.: 269.

⁴²⁸See Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). One of the interesting aspects of the photos collected by Alloula is the how the women are represented. They, for the most part, framed by the door or the window. These are, in a sense, the invitation and the denial of entry into the inner spaces of the Harem. That is, though the women of the Harem are being photographed, their stance at the openings to the Harem denies the viewer unfettered entry into that inner space. That is, you may see

the veil and the Casbah's architecture as instruments of purdah: devices of silence.

The city's function as a site of difference in colonial discourse extends beyond the metaphorical, a quality that Ghosh appropriates to subvert the modernist disciplinary mechanism. Calcutta's rejection of transparency transcends the topographical and architectural. It is an ontological negation. Murugan encounters this when, in his first day in Calcutta, he seeks refuge from a monsoon downpour in the Rabindra Sadan auditorium where the writer Saiyad Murad Husain - alias Phulboni - is delivering a speech. About Calcutta, Phulboni avers:

Every city has its secrets . . .but Calcutta, whose vocation is excess, has more secrets than any other. Elsewhere, by the workings of paradox, secrets live in the telling: they whisper life into humdrum street corners and dreary alleys; into the rubbish-strewn rears of windowless tenements and the blackened floors of oil-bathed workshops. But here in our city where all law, natural and human, is held in capricious suspension, that which is hidden has no need of words to give it life; like any creature that lives in a perverse element, it mutates to discover sustenance precisely where it appears to

the women, but in seeing the women you are not seeing the Harem. See Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Mitchell argues that the Casbah, as with all native quarters, has a carceral function. It allows the French to deploy its surveillance mechanism. This is conveyed in *La Bataille d'Alger* when, at the height of the conflict, Colonel Mathew orders that the Casbah be cordoned off, allowing only those with special work passes to enter and exit the city.

be most starkly withheld - in this case, in silence.⁴²⁹

Although Phulboni's description of Calcutta's secrets and squalor seems to echo an internalized Orientalism, his locus of enunciation rejects such an interpretation. Orientalism's universalist aspirations disavow all who function from within a different cosmology. It approaches "secrets" as tableaux to read, faces to be unveiled. Phulboni's description places Calcutta beyond the veil. Her differences are not surface distinctions but internal to the very being-in-the-world of its inhabitants. Calcutta is thus not a passive space to be interpreted and endowed with meaning. It is an active space that writes itself on the lives of those who share her secrets.⁴³⁰

The episteme Phulboni invokes in his description of Calcutta sets the tone for Murugan's search. Calcutta's suspension of "all law, natural and human" and its disregard for "words to give it life," places it beyond writing. For, inasmuch as writing seeks to fix its subject in time and space, *The Calcutta Chromosome's* rejection of fixity participates in the deconstruction of writing.⁴³¹ The novel and the passport are no longer stable signifiers of national or individual identity, but

⁴²⁹Ghosh, 25.

⁴³⁰See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Columbian Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁴³¹For a discussion of fixity in colonial and postcolonial discourse, see Bhabha.

constitute shifting narratives that belie Jameson's contention that the postcolonial novel is "necessarily about the nation state."⁴³² *The Calcutta Chromosome* shares with Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* a disruption of "fixity". Whereas Tutuola recruits Yoruba metaphysics and syntax to disrupt the novelistic form, Ghosh uses the malarial fever to lend the novel the quality of delirium. The novel's feverish state allows narrative borders to bleed into each other, creating intersubjective matrices where there are no superfluous characters or meaningless encounters.

Calcutta's heterological spaces render Murugan's detective techniques ineffective. That is, insofar as Murugan's search for the agents behind his "Other Mind" theory places the novel, at a first read, within the detective-cum-mystery genre, Ghosh's narrative undermines the modernist rationale that undergirds the mystery genre. This refusal is both internal and external to the plot. The narrative structure of the classic detective novel, with few exceptions, in its unfolding of the crime, affirms the certainty of reason in the world. The genre takes its readers along on a journey from irrationality - the discovery of the body, the missing person, or the missing jewel - to rationality - the detective's resolution of the case. More importantly than the closing of the case is the monological form it often assumes.

⁴³²Frederic Jameson, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986).

The detective or witnesses/narrator spares no effort in recounting the journey from irrationality to rationality from a singular perspective. In this unfolding, the protagonist/detective becomes the very embodiment of reason.

Whether Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, the detective is a master reader.⁴³³ For as Holmes so often reminds Dr. Watson, the detective does not only see, but observes. In his study of law, Derrida maintains that the archive, contrary to Foucault's contention, is not a "discursive domain," but "an actual place where the law is instituted."⁴³⁴ The "there" of the law is the locus of interpretation. The archive is thus the site of the *archons* ("men and gods"), who "'exercise social order' not discursively but hermeneutically through the interpretation of texts."⁴³⁵ The hard-boiled detective has much in common with Derrida's *archons*. The detective's reading of the world as text participates not only in the "law of what can be said," but in the interpretation of the world as reason. His job is thus twofold. First, he is a "reader of signs."⁴³⁶ To solve, crime the detective must read the world as would a criminal; he must not

⁴³³Diane Stevenson, "Landscape and Race in the Detective Novel," *Studies of Humanities* 19, no. 2 (1992): 154.

⁴³⁴Sandhya Shetty and Elizabeth J. Bellamy, "Postcolonialism's Archive Fever," *Diacritics* 30, no. 1 (2000): 28.

⁴³⁵*Ibid.*

⁴³⁶Stevenson: 145.

only be able to read the crime scene as a text authored by the criminal, but must anticipate the narrative's unfolding.

The detective's relationship to the criminal and to crime requires a doubling which the genre inherits from the Gothic. The Gothic novel articulates the struggle between good and evil as an internal conflict. The nemesis of the gothic character resides not in the world as an independent construct. Rather, they are manifestations of a largely internal, psychic split.⁴³⁷ The detective novel externalizes this divide. The evil the detective engages exists independent of him. Hence, the divide between good and evil assumes a linguistic character. The detective assumes a linguistic relationship to the criminal, where intelligibility is dependant on the detective's ability to establish a stable link between the signified and the signifier. Thus, in the classic detective novel, the detective and the criminal, though occupying opposite poles of the moral continuum, share the same epistemic frame. The shared episteme limits the interpretational possibilities, rendering the signs inert. The signs have no inherent power to destabilize the detective's self. It is this linguistic stability that makes it possible for the detective to occupy, to become one with the criminal without himself becoming a criminal. As Dennis Porter notes, "Detective

⁴³⁷For an illustration of this Gothic tension, see Stephen King, *The Shining* (New York: New American Library, 1997).

novels invariably project the image of a given social order and the implied value system that helps to sustain it."⁴³⁸ The detective remains within the realm of what can be said: he adheres to the law.

It would be misleading, however, to conceive of the detective as a passive reader of signs. As an extension of his role as a decipherer of signs, the detective is a social cartographer. His search for the criminal is an active process of inscribing the world. Hence, we may argue that the detective does not simply read and follow clues, but also participates in the production of signs. The detective has a hermeneutic function. Franco Moretti illustrates this in his study of the representation of space in the crime fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle. He argues that one can learn much about the Victorian understanding of criminality by following Sherlock Holmes' movements. Doyle's is a limited representation of London. The locus of crime in Doyle's novels, compared to Charles Booth's study of crime, for example, is the West End. That is, there is an obvious asymmetry in the representation of crime in Doyle's and Booth's works. For while Doyle's novels confine crime to "the London of wealth," Booth's study locates crime "in the

⁴³⁸Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 121.

London of poverty.”⁴³⁹ Moretti reasons that Doyle locates fictional crime in “the London of Wealth” because in “detective fiction . . . crime must be precisely an *enigma*: an unheard-of event, a ‘case’, and adventure’.”⁴⁴⁰ Holmes does not venture into the East End for poverty renders crime transparent: “it [the East End] is a visible, widespread reality, which has absolutely no mystery about it.” Moretti suggests, moreover, that Doyle’s representation of London transcends the mere articulation of class distinctions. He notes that in locating the bulk of the stories of criminal activities in the South of London Doyle participates in the construction of “invasion literature.” “A narrative universe where almost half of the criminals are foreigners” mirrors the internal class division policed by Holmes.⁴⁴¹

Contrary to the spaces the Western detective inhabits, Murugan’s Calcutta negates the clear demarcation between inside and outside. Murugan’s first encounter with the city presages a space that has no fixed bearings. A network of characters populates every corner of the city and it is through them that the city reveals itself. However, insofar as they belong to a secret society whose codes of meaning are decidedly non-linear, they stall Murugan’s search for truth. They deny Murugan the

⁴³⁹Moretti, 136.

⁴⁴⁰Ibid., 137.

detective's capacity to script space. Mangala's society is always already pre-scripted. The genetic transposition at novel's root muddles the linear progression that allows the detective to construct an individual and social conception of space and time. *The Calcutta Chromosome* blurs the distinction between a character's past, present, and future. Inasmuch as personality, the character's essence, is movable through time, the resulting chronotope transforms space from a empty system to be coded by the presence of the detective to a network, an entity that has secrets that cannot be easily unveiled. The city is thus, much like its inhabitants, in constant motion. This complication of space further disrupts the detective novels' role in articulating the frontier between the self and the Other.

The Frontier in the Colonial and Postcolonial Imaginary

In his essay "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin signals the effect of Europe's "emergence from a socially isolated and culturally deaf semipatriarchal society, and its entrance into international and interlingual contacts and relationships" in the development of the novel.⁴⁴² The encounter with an Other effects a dialogical moment that refracts the epic's need for

⁴⁴¹Ibid., 140.

⁴⁴²Holquist, ed., 11.

completeness.⁴⁴³ The novel surfaces as a complex intersubjective field that traces the borders between Europe and its Other. The dialogical moment in the Euro-American novel is manifest most acutely as anxiety. This anxiety is evinced in Europe's navigation of colonial spaces. As Edward Said points out, the European novel represents the colonies as "realms of possibility."⁴⁴⁴ The colonies are fields on which European men and women play out the narratives of being and becoming from which they are barred access in the metropole. In this play of difference, the Other becomes the foil against which Europe and America enact their meaning narratives.

The locus of encounter as a site for the play of difference finds powerful expression in literature about the American West. Larry McMurtry's frontier epic, *Lonesome Dove*, is a characteristic example. *Lonesome Dove* introduces the men of the Hat Creek Cattle Company: August "Gus" McCrae and Woodrow F. Call, two former captains of the Texas Rangers, living in Lonesome Dove, a town without "a respectable shade tree within twenty or thirty miles,"⁴⁴⁵ in Southern Texas. A great deal has been said about *Lonesome Dove* and its "realistic" portrayal of

⁴⁴³For an elaboration of the concept of an unconscious presence, see Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.

⁴⁴⁴Said, 74.

⁴⁴⁵ Larry McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 4.

life in the frontier. In an essay in *The New York Times Review of Books*, Nicholas Lemann calls *Lonesome Dove* an "anti-western" and "anti-mythic" novel that contributes greatly to an accurate portrayal of "the lonely, ignorant, violent West."⁴⁴⁶ This, Lemann contends, goes far in moving the western genre from its lowly status in the American literary tradition. However, in celebrating the entry of the "big trail-driving" novel into the canon of American high arts, critics of McMurtry have largely overlooked the play of difference that structures and supports the novel. Lemann, for example, reluctantly accedes to this when he notes, "all of Mr. McMurtry's antimythic groundwork -his refusal to glorify the West - works to reinforce the strength of the traditional mythic parts of 'Lonesome Dove,' by making it far more credible than the old familiar horse operas."⁴⁴⁷ Foremost among the novel's mythopoetic contributions is its rehearsal of the frontiersmen's individualism and masculinity. In characteristic form for the genre, the frontiersmen being-in-the-world is articulated in quasi-biblical terms. It is framed as the eternal conflict of men against nature. We encounter this in the novel's first two paragraphs. McMurtry writes:

When August came out on the porch, the blue
pigs were eating a rattlesnake . . . It had

⁴⁴⁶Nicholas Lemann, "Tall in the Saddle," *The New York Times Review of Books* 90 (1985): 7.

⁴⁴⁷Ibid.

probably just been crawling around looking for shade when it ran into the pigs. They were having a fine tug-of-war with it, and its rattling days were over. "You pigs git," August said, kicking the shoat, "Head on down to the creek if you want to eat that snake." It was the porch he begrudged them, not the snake.⁴⁴⁸

Gus' contest with the pigs places Lonesome Dove's inhospitability in stark relief. Lonesome Dove is the antithesis of the lush river valley of so many western dime novels. McMurtry expands on his portrayal of the Western landscape when, in his response to revisionist historians' treatments of the West, he invites his readers to "[c]ross the Staked Plains, cross the Mojave, cross the Donner Pass in a blizzard . . . cross almost anyplace in the West when it is too cold, too hot, too empty, when the sand is blowing in your face or the hailstones are threatening your windshield."⁴⁴⁹ The invitation rings like a challenge when he adds, "[c]ross almost any part of it in a lowering light and you may wish heartily that you were back in some civilized place like the Piazza Navonna, eating gelato and feeling cozy." McMurtry's demythologizing of the landscape places the West within a Darwinian understanding. The West is a zone where men, nature, and beast struggle and where a unique species of men is born, a species capable not only of braving the landscape's challenges,

⁴⁴⁸McMurtry, 3.

⁴⁴⁹Larry McMurtry, "How the West Was Won and Lost: The Revisionists' Failure of Imagination," *The New Republic*, October 22 1990, 37.

but of converting them into opportunities.

McMurtry's narrative places the frontier and its European inhabitants in a metonymic relationship to the emerging nation. America becomes a space possessed of the very characteristic that defines men like Gus and Call. McMurtry makes clear this metonymic connection when he asserts that revisionist historians have overlooked the continued importance of the West as an imaginative levee against the "realities" of late-modern life. He writes:

The West of the imagination is the West upon which the revisionist Sancho Panzas now wish to shine the sober light of common day. Fair enough. Still, it might interest a few of them to read the end of Don Quixote, to consider what happens when the crazy old Don surrenders his fancies and lets the tough little realist have his way.⁴⁵⁰

What his statement leaves unexamined is the overdetermined nature of the attributes that define his frontiersmen. This is particularly true of his characters' individualism. Both Gus and Call are uncompromising about their unique sense of being, a position that often brings them into conflict. Their individualism gives rise to what Robert Crooks sees as a seeming paradox in the heart of the frontier.⁴⁵¹ While the frontier is depicted as the locus proper of individualism, it is

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., 38.

⁴⁵¹See Robert Crooks, "From the Far Side to the Urban Frontier: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes and Walter Mosley," *College*

simultaneously recruited in the scripting of a national, cohesive identity. The resulting tension - between frontier atomism and nationalism - can be understood in the conflict between the Anglo-American frontiersmen and their Mexican and Native American neighbors. This is particularly resonant in Call and Gus's complex relationship to "the law." Call and Gus, former Texas Rangers, pride themselves on having excelled in their duties as upholders of civilization in the frontier, a mission expressed in terms of property rights. One is left, however, to reconcile their purported "moral duty to show respect for and to protect each man's property"⁴⁵² with their ranching business that was dependant on periodic cattle raids across the border into Mexico. Unremarked in this narrative are the governmental and juridical regimes that create a zone of exclusion around the Hat Creek Cattle Company. The laws enforced by the Texas Rangers have a differential impact on the populations that inhabit the frontier. For while Call and Gus's theft of Mexican and Native American property is cast within a narrative of individualism and exploration, the obverse is viewed as the Other's disregard for law and the rights to property. Hence, Robert Crooks remarks, "[T]he frontier as a producer of unity is precisely a 'fortified

Literature 22, no. 3 (1995).

⁴⁵²Angela Henderson, "Friction as Reality: Lonesome Dove, the Law, and a Property-Holder's Society," *Journal of The West* 39, no. 4 (2000): 50.

boundary' dividing 'civilization' from the 'savage' other, a consolidating interpretation that rescues a racialized sense of national identity from the threat of anarchist individualism."⁴⁵³

The Western frontier as the American archetypal field of difference gives way to the urban frontier in the first decades of the twentieth century. The decline of the American West as a viable literary field on which to enact the racial play of difference coincides with the insistence of African-American narrative forms in American mainstream culture. Much like the works of Tutuola and Ghosh, African-American novels wrestle with the tension implicit in the hyphen. The hyphen in this case, as Jacques Derrida suggests, cannot "conceal the protests, cries of anger or suffering, the noise of weapons, airplanes, and bombs."⁴⁵⁴ What results, therefore, is a field of signification that greatly overlaps with Tutuola's and Ghosh's.

Attracted by the World War II industrial boom, hundreds of thousands of African-Americans moved to cities in the north and west in search of jobs and away from the daily injuries of Southern Jim Crow.⁴⁵⁵ Their arrival in cities like Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles forever transformed the metaphorical

⁴⁵³Crooks: 69.

⁴⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, ed. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, trans. Patrick Mensah, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 11.

⁴⁵⁵ See Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black*

function of the city in the American literary imagination. A note of objection might be introduced here. It could be convincingly argued that the experiences of East European and Irish immigrants living in the tenements of New York and Chicago had, long before the mass arrival of African-Americans, played a decided role in the American self-conception.⁴⁵⁶ The resentment against East European and Irish immigrants was, however, based less on race than on a perceived reluctance on the part of the new immigrant to abandon "old world" habits and culture. Integration was not only a possibility, but also an expectation. African-Americans were denied this possibility. Hence, when the Africanist presence, previously confined to Southern plantations and to small in Northern cities to warrant great concern, burst through the plantation gates, it thrust itself upon America like a "dark human cloud that clung like a remorse."⁴⁵⁷ Americans in the North responded by lifting a page out of the Southern planter's manual. African-Americans arrived in northern cities to conditions that were, in many respects, not qualitatively different from those they had left in the South. They found that they had only

Migration and How It Changed America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

⁴⁵⁶For the immigrant's role in American literary imagination see James.

⁴⁵⁷W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 67.

exchanged the confines of Southern plantations for those of Northern slums.⁴⁵⁸

Restricted in their choice of housing, work, and school, they found freedom in their expressive traditions. They found solace and wisdom in the call and response of the Baptist church and in the melancholy of the blues.⁴⁵⁹ The creative freedom that sustained Jazz and "the dozens" could not, however, remain confined to Harlem and South Central.⁴⁶⁰ The improvisational and rhythmic force of the blues and jazz moved the African-American cultural presence beyond the slum's borders and forced America into a radical confrontation with its mongrel self,⁴⁶¹ forcing a reconceptualization of the frontier. As Robert Crooks notes,

[T]he meaning of the other side of the frontier, in the shift of focus from its western to its urban manifestation, had been partly transformed: no longer enemy territory to be attacked and conquered or vacant land to be cultivated, it now constitutes in mainstream European-American ideologies pockets of racial intrusion, hence

⁴⁵⁸See Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*. See among others Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), and James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On the Mountain*. Many African-American writers have seen this migration as having a detrimental effect on the culture of African-Americans. See, for example, Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1902).

⁴⁵⁹James Baldwin explores this in some detail in his novel *Go Tell It On the Mountain*.

⁴⁶⁰For an analysis of the signifyin(g) structure of "the dozen," see Gates, 71-77.

⁴⁶¹See Douglas.

corruption and social disease to be policed and contained . . .⁴⁶²

The locus of enunciation for “a racialized sense of national identity” thus began to shift from the West to the city: the Texas Ranger metamorphoses into the hard-boiled detective. As Crooks asserts: “the hard-boiled American detective is a direct descendant of nineteenth-century frontier heroes like Natty Bumpoo, liminal figures who crisscross the frontier, loyal to European-American society but isolated from it through their intimate involvement with Native American others.”⁴⁶³ Crooks’ attribution of liminality to the detective and frontier hero also applies to the West and urban frontiers as discursive fields. This is true of the Hat Creek Cattle Company. McMurtry depicts the Cattle Company and its owner as inhabiting a zone of danger; they police a thin line separating the fledgling American civilization from “enemies foreign and domestic.” The city performs a similar function in the detective novel. The latent danger attributed to Native Americans is transposed, in the detective novel, onto African-Americans. Harlem and South Central become the new Wild West, where Euro-Americans are in perennial danger. In the urban enclaves populated by African-Americans the danger is less the loss of scalp, than the loss of white purity through race mixing. Paul Chevigny reflects on this

⁴⁶²Crooks: 71.

fear when he writes:

Many white people went Uptown with a shiver of adventure, supposedly to abandon the restraints of respectability; the effect was intensified by the fact that most Harlem clubs were among the few places in a segregated society where blacks and whites could mix.⁴⁶⁴

In the latter context, the fear is no less over-determined than in the Western novel, inasmuch as the mechanisms that disperse racial codes limited the possibility of African-Americans crossing the urban physical and cultural divide. The hard-boiled detective novel ensures this in much the same way as the Western novel. Both participate in denying the Other's agency. As *Lonesome Dove* illustrates, the frontiersmen's fear of the "Indian" is disproportionate to the threat, for the American government's campaign against Native-Americans had left their populations decimated, thus posing no real threat to America's westward expansion. What remained was a landscape populated by mythic "Indians," serving a rhetorical function. The Comanche, in *Lonesome Dove*, are an imagined presence that allows Gus and Call to produce their being toward law. The hard-boiled detective novel assumes a similar posture toward African-American urban communities, rendering them into empty presences that enable European-American's racial identity.

⁴⁶³Ibid.: 72.

⁴⁶⁴Paul Chevigny, *Gigs: Jazz and the Cabaret Laws in New York* (New

The sequestering of African-Americans within urban enclaves proves universally limiting. The surrounding of African-Americans in an aura of delinquency justifies the deployment of "the pulsating sound of chopper blades" and of police sirens in the surveillance of their communities that ensures their restricted entry into mainstream America and their retention as a surplus labor force.⁴⁶⁵ An unforeseen consequence of this strategy is the creation of the conditions of possibility for the exclusion of European-Americans from the African-American cultural milieu. For while European-Americans who frequented the Savoy, the Cotton Club, or the myriad other spaces of cultural encounter felt they possessed a cosmopolitan understanding of the inner workings of the African-American culture, they were, in effect, witnessing a public performance: a performance acutely aware of the dynamics of racial presence. The African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar encapsulates this when, in his poem "We Wear the Mask," he writes:

We wear the mask that grins and lies/It hides our
cheeks and shades our eyes,-/ This debt we pay to
human guile;/With torn and bleeding hearts we
smile,/And mouth with myriad subtleties.⁴⁶⁶

York: Routledge, 1995), 41.

⁴⁶⁵Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men: The W. E. B. DuBois Lectures* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 169. See also Kelley.

⁴⁶⁶Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," in Dierdre Mullane, ed., *Crossing the Danger Water: Three Hundred Years of African-American Writing* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993), 350.

Dunbar's mask of "myriad subtleties" is a product not of cultural differences as such, but of African-Americans' denied entry. Hence what was originally an exterior imposition - a structure of alterity maintained by slavery and segregation - finds, as a survival strategy, an interior equivalent. Contrary to the axiom that fences make for good neighbors, the sequestering of African-Americans within the borders of northern slums furthered solidified the differences in meaning narratives between European and African-Americans.

The construction of the city as a racially divided space allows African-American writers to assume a postcolonial posture to the detective genre. That is, the African-American detective genre occupies a position not unlike that occupied by the works of Tutuola and Ghosh. Their strategy is not simply to de-center the racial primacy of the hard-boiled detective novel. Put differently, theirs is not an attempt to craft an imaginative negation of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. Rather, the African-American writer interrogates the construction of the urban frontier to reveal not only the manner in which racial differences are constructed and policed, but to assemble narratives of being that transcend these impositions. That is, the American detective novel addresses Euro-America's exclusion from African-American codes of meaning by constructing a network of informants-cum-surrogates through which the hard-boiled

detective gains access to the black community. This strategy, however, renders the hard-boiled detective dependent on "native informants," making it possible for the African-American would-be-detective to enact a play of difference that transgresses the racial structures that seek to imprison him.⁴⁶⁷

The postcolonial deformation implicit in the transformation of the codes of the hardboiled detective novel by African-American mystery writers resonates with the minstrel tradition. Minstrelsy is an exemplary precursor that illustrates the transgressive possibility inherent in the encounter between African and European-Americans. Retaining Paul Laurence Dunbar's metaphor, the minstrel tradition can be read as a practice that sought to impose a dark mask on African-Americans. It attempted to naturalize African-Americans as radically Other by "misappropriating elements from everyday black use, from the vernacular . . . and fashioning them into a comic array, a mask of selective memory. . ."⁴⁶⁸ Minstrel performances depended on the overt use of color, affectation, and other traits common to America's racial arsenal to "epidermize," and mark racial differences. Although intended to incarcerate African-Americans within a "form that any Afro-American who desired to be

⁴⁶⁷Theodore O. Mason, Jr., "Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins: The Detective Fiction and Afro-American Literature," *The Kenyon Review* 14, no. 4 (1992): 174.

⁴⁶⁸Huston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*

articulate - to speak at all - had to master," minstrelsy's carceral function is subverted by African-American actors and orators alike.

Through the "mastery of form" and the "deformation of mastery" African-Americans found it possible to use minstrelsy against itself.⁴⁶⁹ Using Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, Houston Baker, Jr. demonstrates how the minstrel tradition becomes, through Washington's mastery of the minstrel form, both a vehicle for subverting America's attempt at silencing its black population and a mode for articulating a form of black nationalism. Washington accomplishes his verbal sleight of hand by making recourse to minstrelsy's "ready-made systems." Within the first two pages of *Up From Slavery*, Baker, Jr. observes, readers "are confronted by a 'chicken-stealing darky'."⁴⁷⁰ Washington's use of "darky" stories and equivalent tropes reveals a profound understanding of his readers' structure of expectation. In beginning his narrative with readily identifiable stories and tropes, Washington creates a narrative scaffolding that enables him to introduce accounts that expose America's racial injustices while avoiding a frontal assault on his readers sensibilities. In his deft hands, the minstrel's mask becomes

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 21.

⁴⁶⁹Ibid., 22.

⁴⁷⁰Ibid., 27.

shield and weapon, a device through which he delivers a "straight lick with a crooked stick."

The sub-genre of detective novels that Stephen Soitos calls the "blues detective" novel offers a later instance of minstrelsy's transgressive potential. As with minstrelsy, the "blues detective" articulates through race a counter-reading to the hard-boiled detective's construction of the body politics. It does so by eschewing conventional mappings of the social body. For while "the traditional detective mediates differences of class," the blues detective "mediates differences of race and culture"⁴⁷¹: it "delineates the color line as primary in any case of social relations [and is] interested in the social and political atmosphere [as] inscribed by racial prejudice."⁴⁷² Walter Mosley's Ezekiel "Easy" Rawlins series is a compelling example. In the first novel in the series, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, Mosley introduces the protagonist, Easy Rawlings, a war veteran living in Los Angeles in 1948. Easy is a reluctant detective. His detective career begins not by choice, but as an act of self-preservation. Recently dismissed from his job with Champion Aircraft and struggling to meet mortgage payments, he is approached by DeWitt Albright, an ex-lawyer from Georgia, who is

⁴⁷¹Mason: 148.

⁴⁷²Stephen Soitos, *The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 31.

searching for a white woman, Daphne Monet, known to frequent bars in black neighborhoods.⁴⁷³ Easy describes his encounter with Albright, whom he marks by the revealing homonym "all bright," thus:

I was surprised to see a white man walk into Joppy's bar. It is not just that he was white but that he wore an off-white linen suit and shirt with a Panama straw hat and bone shoe over flashing white socks. His skin was smooth and pale with just a few freckles.⁴⁷⁴

Easy's description betrays a profound preoccupation with race. In this description, "All bright" is not only white, but is clad in white from his Panama hat to his bone shoe, a whiteness that is both uniform and a uniform. In representing Albright as "whiter than white," Mosley secures minstrelsy's dichromatic scale - the play of white against black - not to code a black presence, but, in an ironic reversal, to mark whiteness as an outside and ominous presence.

The link between whiteness and danger is explicit in Easy's admission of fear at first seeing Albright walk through the door of Joppy's bar. "When he first looked at me I felt a thrill of fear," Easy notes.⁴⁷⁵ Easy's admission sketches an articulate racial geography. For although he admits to having gotten "used

⁴⁷³Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990).

⁴⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷⁵*Ibid.*

to white people” and, while fighting in the Second World War, to having “killed enough blue-eyed young men to know that they were just as afraid to die as [he] was,”⁴⁷⁶ his initial “thrill of fear” at Albright’s presence negates anything resembling racial familiarity. Hence, though Albright’s whiteness grants him entry into South Central, L.A. and Joppy’s bar, his whiteness renders his presence suspect.⁴⁷⁷ Easy reminds us that - excluding the landlord who called at the end of every month to collect rent - Albright was the only white man to have ever entered the bar. The rarity of encounters between blacks and whites in places like Joppy’s and the knowledge of the power structure that undergirds them occasions a play of masks that seeks to deflect the ever-present danger, which explains Easy’s assertion in *A Red Death* that “the colored population at that time wasn’t ready to tell a white man anything resembling the truth.”⁴⁷⁸

The lack of meaningful interaction makes the black “detective” indispensable to white lawmen and gangsters alike. To locate someone in South Central or in other such racialized spaces, the white detective must resort to black interlocutors, someone with access to the codes of meaning he lacks. Berrettini

⁴⁷⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷Carl Van Vechten’s fascination with black culture and his search for membership among Harlem’s cultural elite in the 1920s poignantly illustrate this phenomena. See, for example, Emily Bernard, ed., *Remember Me to Harlem: The Letters of Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten, 1925-1964* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

thus notes that in *Devil in a Blue Dress* "Even though the woman is white like Albright, her preference [for black neighborhoods] precludes the white man from actively searching for her and conversely necessitates Easy's or some other black person's involvement."⁴⁷⁹ The need for informants paints in glaring colors the fault lines in America's cultural and political landscape. It converts black communities from the exotic, marginal spaces of Dashiell Hammet's and Raymond Chandler's novels to loci of competing political and social narratives.⁴⁸⁰ The dependency on black interlocutors and the resulting centrality of the African-American detective and community to these narratives transforms them into transgressive texts and characters. This drive to transgress is articulated in the black character's need to fashion a self and a mode of being that transcends the roles scripted for him by the larger society. As Mason notes, "The detective like the novel's seeker/heroes, discovers not only his inadequacy, but also the profound inadequacy of the whole range of social matrices that presumably have constructed cultural knowledge." The insufficiency of these social matrices not only

⁴⁷⁸Walter Mosley, *A Red Death* (New York: Pocket Books, 1991), 115.

⁴⁷⁹Mark L. Berrettini, "Private Knowledge, Public Space: Investigation and Navigation in *Devil in a Blue Dress*," *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 1 (1999): 75.

⁴⁸⁰The detective novel is fertile terrain for such inquiries. For works that explore the gender dimension of the fault-lines, see, among others, Grace F. Edwards, *A Toast before Dying* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998). and Barbara Neely, *Blanche Cleans Up* (New York: Penguin Books,

engender competing narratives, but also confront the necessity for navigating distinct territories that function on the basis of distinct epistemic structures. This is articulated most clearly in the blues detective's confrontation with criminality as act and concept. For, as the examples of Doyle and Boot suggest, what constitutes a criminal act is dependant on one's social location, race complicates the blues detective relationship to the criminal milieu. While the blues detective finds himself within and participates in a formalized discourse on law, his locus of enunciation forces him to acknowledge and historicize the differential effects of law on the black body. Hence, though his position limits his ability to challenge the primacy of law, he subverts the legal discourse by introducing a different reading, a different hermeneutic tradition.

Easy's relationship to his longtime friend, Raymond "Mouse" Alexander, offers an example of this different hermeneutic tradition at work. By conventional definitions, Mouse is a sociopath. His long record of assault, robbery, and murder together with an absolute lack of remorse and a propensity to turn against friend and foe alike makes him a dangerous character. However, when we read his criminality through an ethical prism that is tinted by the reality of racial oppression,

he emerges as less of an unrepentant criminal than the willful outsider who operates at counter-purposes to the ethics responsible for his oppression. Mouse is Easy's alter ego, the series' anti-hero. Critics of Mosley's novels, like music critics who rail at gangster-rap's advocacy and celebration of violence, have too often assumed an overly simplistic stance toward Mouse's violence. They tend to read his gunplay, like Public Enemy's injunction against the police, as symptoms of a social, read racial, pathology. This reading inserts itself in a social feedback-loop that seizes the purported pathology to justify a punitive legal disposition. These critics fail, or perhaps refuse, to see in Mouse's gunplay an articulate assault on an ethics that masks the most egregious forms of psychic and physical violence under the rubric of law.⁴⁸¹ They discount Fanon's assertion that "this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence."⁴⁸² For Mouse, as for the gangster-rapper, therefore, what is at stake in violence, whether textual or "real," is the construction of a self beyond the dominant narrative's grasp. Similarly, what is at stake for the blues detective is not the mystery. As Mason, notes, "the mystery here is finally not about

⁴⁸¹For further discussion on rap and resistance, see Michael Eric Dyson, *Between God and Gangster Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁴⁸²Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 37.

money or murder. Rather the mystery revealed here concerns the shifting nature of racial 'being' and cultural knowledge."⁴⁸³

The transgressive potential of the blues detective is muted by the genre's refusal to embrace the anti-hero. Mosley structures Mouse's counter-ethics as the obverse side of the legal discourse that Easy navigates. Although by no means a faithful interpreter of the law, Easy is a master of the form. His mastery of the form allows him to transgress the legal discourse by practicing a "double-conscious detection" - selectively transgressing and upholding the white judicial system.⁴⁸⁴ Easy's position, unlike Mouse's, does not allow him to completely depart from the social structures that seek to limit his ability to define himself. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in his middle class aspirations. The plots of Mosley's Easy Rawlins series revolve, in significant ways, around Easy's relationship to his house. The house is central to Mosley's contextualization of the experience of soldiers like Easy who, after they returned home from the Second World War, saw ownership of property as the vector for entry into mainstream America. Easy reflects on his relationship to his house thus:

the thought of paying my mortgage reminded me of my front yard and the shade of my fruit trees in the summer heat. I felt I was just as good as any

⁴⁸³Mason: 182.

⁴⁸⁴Berrettini: 86.

white man, but if I didn't even own my front door then people would look at me like just another poor beggar, with his hand outstretched.⁴⁸⁵

Easy's reflection is instructive for it shows his ownership of the house to exceed mere refuge from summer heat. His ambition plays into a discourse that measures human worth according to property. In this sense, the house is far more than an address. It is a social nexus that figures prominently in political and legal discourse about race, class, and gender. The house thus serves as both a locus from which Easy constructs a self that transgresses abject notions of inferiority and binds him to a structure that hinders his ability to construct a radically mobile self.

Against McMurtry's and Mosley's conception of the frontier, Ghosh articulates a space which evades the frontier discourse. By immersing his characters in a surrealist space, a space of delirium, *The Calcutta Chromosome* appropriates the magical and fantastic to disrupt all conceptions of home as stable loci from which to map movement and difference. Hence, contrary to *the Texas Ranger* and *the blues detective*, Murugan has no constant points from which to negotiate the identity. This instability haunts Murugan's search. He is caught in Calcutta's tidal movement of becoming. The novel's epistemic entanglements grant no fixed reference point from where to perform the role of

⁴⁸⁵Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, 9.

the investigator-protagonist. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has no room for the panoptical. Murugan is thus, unlike Easy, not at the center of the narrative and neither are the lives of the novel's other characters secondary to his own. In the absence of a fixed reference point, Murugan cannot achieve the doubling that is the hallmark of the traditional detective. The world is not a fixed exterior to be mapped, but exists in a nomadic field.

By denying Murugan stable frontiers, *The Calcutta Chromosome* frustrates the will-to-truth. It adopts a Heisenbergian posture where the presence of the questioner transforms both the self and the interlocutor. Murugan's encounter, like our reading of the novel, does not fix subjects in time and space, but sets them afloat in an unsettled field of meaning. That is, the interlocutors in *The Calcutta Chromosome* are not fixed with the bounds of race or nation. Much like the Calcutta chromosome's role in the transposition of personalities, encounters in the novel foster continuous transformation. Encounters are, therefore, not only dialogical, but, by their very nature, produce transformative dislocations. These dislocations result in an uncertainty that resists all fixed identities. Murugan conveys this when, in an exchange with Antar, he notes:

“Do you think that everything that can be known should be known?” “Of course,” said Antar.
 “I don't see why not.” “All right,”

said Murugan . . . "I'll turn a few pages for you; but remember, it was you who asked. It's your funeral."⁴⁸⁶

Murugan's "it's your funeral" is both figurative and literal. He recognizes that one of the implications of knowing is not simply the "death of ignorance," but the transformation, the death of a former self. That is, the self is born anew in every encounter. Murugan conveys this transformative aspect of knowledge when he summarizes Mangala's reasons for selecting Ross thus:

It's my guess that by 1897 Mangala had run into a dead end, and she'd come to the conclusion that the existent strains of malaria wouldn't let her go any further. That's why she was so desperate to have Ronnie figure the whole thing out and publish it. Because she actually believed that the link between the bug and the human mind was so close that once its life cycle had been figured out it would spontaneously mutate in directions that would take her work to the next step.⁴⁸⁷

Mangala's and her followers' belief in the transposition of personality places all identity in a constant state of becoming. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is thus moved outside of classical conceptions of knowing. Insofar as it denies fixed subject positions, the novel places identity in a nomadic plane where the Other one seeks invariably leads back to the self. The I.D. card, which sets Antar's search in motion, is inadequate to capture identity's continuous flux, its becoming.

⁴⁸⁶ Ghosh, 59.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

*Another Reason*⁴⁸⁸

The *Calcutta Chromosome's* disruption of established identity narratives does not stop with the interrogation of fixity as a necessary element of knowledge practices. In questioning individual narratives, Ghosh exposes the intersection of individual and national biographies. Ronald Ross's biography, as it emerges in Murugan's reconstruction, is not an account of the lone genius who achieves great scientific leaps through monastic determination. Rather, it reveals the interconnection of applied science and the colonial bureaucratic apparatus.

The 1924 London exhibition, devoted to the British empire, brilliantly spotlights this imbrication. The exhibition, the first of its kind after the First World War, was mounted as a celebration of imperial achievement and meant to demonstrate Britain's "effort to overcome disease. . .expand trade . . . And raise the life of the world from the disorder of war."⁴⁸⁹ The countless displays of "imperial produce and products" effected the picture of a world united peacefully under the Union Jack. Scientific demonstrations took central stage, bolstering the

⁴⁸⁸ The title for this section comes from Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴⁸⁹ "Current Topics and Events," *Nature* 113 (3 May 1924): 648 quoted in Roy MacLeod, "Passages in Imperial Science: From Empire to

Commonwealth vision while justifying Britain's imperial aspirations. Among the various scientific demonstrations at the exhibition's opening was the sending of a cable message "telegraphed around the world by an electric touch, circling the globe in eighty seconds."⁴⁹⁰ MacLeod writes:

By imperial cable the message ran from London to Belfast, Fayard to Halifax, Auckland and Sydney; from Sydney to Adelaide, Perth, thence to the Cocos Islands, Rodriguez, Durban, Capetown, St. Helena, Ascension, St. Vincent, Madeira, then finally back to Alexandra Palace. . . All these locations were either within the empire or within its sphere of influence. United politically, militarily, and by the benign presence of the Royal Navy, they were united now by a force of nature, symbolizing the united energy of dominions and colonies.⁴⁹¹

The message's circumnavigation of the globe spoke not only to the scientific advances that made possible what would have been inconceivable a decade earlier, but it also affirmed the imperial apparatus that undergirded such grand experiments.

In its circumambulation, the message affirms a geopolitical rendering of the globe in which science emerges as the determinant of civilizational status. Contrary to pre-industrial civilizational classificatory schema, a schema dependent on religious attainment, beginning in the eighteenth century, scientific and industrial achievement become the measures of

Commonwealth," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 1 (1993): 117.

⁴⁹⁰Ibid.

civilizational attainment.⁴⁹² In a modernist twist, Hegel's often cited assertion that the Other, particular the African, has no civilizational history and hence falls outside the scope of human history. This is inflected by David Hume's contention that "Africans had no science . . . nor even any individual eminent in their action or speculation'."⁴⁹³ Civilizational distinctions begin to operate, in large measure, through a scientific axis. Science, as instrumental reason, is inserted in a taxonomic structure that marks the evolutionary distinctions.

The West anchors this negative evolutionary cartography. The evolutionary schema of scientific progress is the metric against which civilizational attributes are measured and categorized. Accordingly, the West is viewed as the fount from whence science springs and flows, if through crooked streams, to the Rest. The prominence of this trope colors virtually every aspect of popular understanding of non-Western gestures. It supports a globalized marketing industry that freely associates the "native" with the harmonious and spiritual; it abets a tourist industry that flattens epistemic differences and deforms cultural practices by appealing to notions of the exotic. This narrative dismisses or discounts all contending narratives. It

⁴⁹¹Ibid.: 117-118.

⁴⁹²Michael Adas, *Machine as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideology of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 7.

relegates, for example, the prominent role of countries like India and China in research and technological innovation to labor issues. It renders the Other into a user and not a creator of tools.

The Calcutta Chromosome subverts this narrative in two ways. First, in a series of ironic reversals, the novel questions the canonical history of imperial science. Mangala's manipulation of Ross's and his counterparts' experiments challenges instrumental reason and negates the West's purported scientific mastery. The colony thus emerges not simply as a zone "inseparable from the authority of science and its functioning as the name for freedom and enlightenment," but, as Mangala's interventions show, it is also the zone on which scientific reason is brought against its own limits.⁴⁹⁴ In the convergence of Mangala's religious-cum-scientific practice and Ross' scientific reason, Ghosh suggests that what drives Ross' search for the agent of malaria exhibits the very same mythic structure as Mangala's search for the vector responsible for the transmission of personality traits. This epistemic entanglement resonates with Prakash's assertion that, in the colonial context, to make the Other recognize the West's scientific power required the

⁴⁹³Hume, *Essays*, Vol 1., 252 quoted in *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁹⁴Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern*

displacement of the colonized/colonizer binary and the undoing of the science/magic opposition. Indians had to be conceded the capacity for understanding if they were to be made into modern subjects, and science had to be performed as magic if it was to establish its authority.⁴⁹⁵

The history of science and the imperial enterprise to which it was associated was an exclusively male enterprise. It is a history populated by patriarchs like the Swedish Botanist Carolus Linnaeus, who used the European empire to develop a universal taxonomic schema that subsumed all non-European forms of knowledge; it is the history of the predecessors of Darwin, who extracted from encounters with non-Europeans a racial classificatory schema that imprisoned the Other in textual and moral categories the repercussions of which we still struggle with. This is a history of the imperial projects' division of labor wherein men sought adventure and women stayed at home.

Mangala disrupts the gendering of the scientific and imperial narrative. Her behind the scenes manipulation of Ross's experiments and her continued orchestration of narratives, both biographical and scientific in Murugan's case, questions the male gaze while it challenges the notion of the West's scientific supremacy. This is exemplified by the novel's use of the microscope. The microscope, the instrument of Antony Leeuwenhoek and Lazzaro Spallanzani, becomes, in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, the

religious iconography not of a male-centered scientific reason, but of a female and native counter-science. It is transformed in Mangala's and her followers' sacred symbol. Ghosh's transmutation of the microscope from a scientific instrument to a cult's iconic symbol, transforms it from an instrument that magnifies and reveals minute truths to an object that conceals and subverts scientific knowledge as will-to-power.

Second, the novel subverts the West's adoption of instrumental reason in the construction of a collective national identity. While piecing together the story of the Calcutta Chromosome, Urmila tells Murugan about the night Phulboni, the writer, spent at Renupur station. In his first and only job, Phulboni worked as a marketing representative for Palmer Brothers, a British manufacturer of "soaps and oils and other household goods."⁴⁹⁶ Palmer Brothers, notes the narrator, "was famous for its extensive distribution network, which reached into the smallest towns and villages."⁴⁹⁷

The overlap in imperialism's driving forces, commerce and civilization, stands out in this description. Anne McClintock, in her study of colonialism, argues that the commercial arena, in the colonial context, "created an uproar not only of things but

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁹⁶ Ghosh, 256.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

of signs.”⁴⁹⁸ She illustrates this uproar of signs through an analysis of adverts as an “organized system of signs” that were consonant with Britain’s colonial iconography. In this system of signs, soap is of particular resonance. For though it entered the stage as a fetish of the domestic cult at a time of crisis in British national identity, its power as fetish soon became “central to industrial modernity, inhabiting and mediating the uncertain threshold zones between domesticity and industry, metropolis and empire.”⁴⁹⁹ McClintock adds, “Soap became one of the first commodities to register the historic shift from myriad small businesses to the great imperial monopolies.”⁵⁰⁰

Implicitly present, in McClintock’s analysis are the technologies that make it possible for soap, as sign and commodity, to reach “into the smallest towns and villages.” Indispensable to colonialism’s commercial and civilizational projects were the “enumerative strategies” of census taking and mapping.⁵⁰¹ These were central to a “colonial pragmatics” aimed at introducing an epistemology that rendered the Other visible and thus governable. Appadurai writes:

the measurement and classification of land was the

⁴⁹⁸McClintock, 208.

⁴⁹⁹Ibid., 210.

⁵⁰⁰Ibid., 211.

⁵⁰¹Arjun Appadurai, “Number in the Colonial Imagination,” in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol Breckenridge and Peter Van der Verr (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

training ground for the culture of number in which statistics became the authorizing discourse of the appendix . . . at the same time that it gave higher level officials a pedagogical and disciplinary sense of controlling not just the territory over which they sought to rule, but also the native functionary through which rule needed to be effected.⁵⁰²

The railway surfaces as a concrete instantiation of the “enumerative strategy.” Both as networks of physical and geographical connections and as tracings of ordered movement, railways become referents of the nation-state, attesting to its internal order and civilizational status.

The ubiquitous presence of the railway in colonial and post-colonial literature attests to its metaphorical force. Featured prominently in works ranging from E.M. Foster’s *A Passage to India* to Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*, railways elucidate and contain the nation-state in contiguous and intelligible unities. In these accounts, the vast network of train stations are nodal points where British and Indians meet and where the differing epistemic traditions intersect, often to the disadvantage of the colonial subject. As Doctor Cunningham, Ross’s predecessor, notes, the colonial train station is the “place to go if you need a willing worker . . . it’s full of people looking for a job and a roof over their heads.”⁵⁰³ In framing the encounter through labor dislocation, Doctor

⁵⁰²Ibid., 325..

Cunningham highlights a significant instance of British imperial apparatus' constitution of the Indian, through the railway, into citizen and subject.

Urmila's account of Phulboni's experience at Renupur station negates the use of railways as tropes that render nation-states coherent. Arriving at the small town of Renupur, Phulboni is surprised to discover that, despite its size, it "boasted a railway station." An eight-hour ride from Calcutta, the station is a stopping point in the railway network connecting Calcutta to the cotton market of Barich. Phulboni arrives at Renupur station, located some three miles distant from the village of Renupur, to an empty platform except for the stationmaster, Budhhu Dubey. The account, to this point, falls well within the conventions of colonial travelogues. It speaks of the great distances and burdens of travel in the colonial setting, while it celebrates the landscape's beauty. The story, however, departs from these conventions when Phulboni arrives at the station.

Confronted by the Station's distance from town and by the monsoon, Phulboni decides, despite the stationmaster's protest, to spend the night in the Station's signal-room. On entering the signal-room, Phulboni finds in the mix of chaos and disrepair an alcove in which stands a signal lantern. The lantern "had been

⁵⁰³Ghosh, 146.

recently cleaned and polished. The tin body was gleaming clean and the circle of red glass in the lantern's window shone bright in the reflected sunlight."⁵⁰⁴ The stark contrast between the room's disarray and the lantern's polish attracts Phulboni's attention. To his queries about the lantern, the stationmaster responds with growing agitation, admonishing him against touching railway property. While he finds the situation odd, Phulboni's reaction is rather cavalier. He sees nothing sinister in the lantern's condition or in the stationmaster's warnings against him staying the night in the room. His perception changes when he awakes in the middle of the night to find the signal-room's door open and the lantern missing. Outside, at a distance, he sees the lantern's red light and, thinking there might have been an accident on the tracks, he follows it intending to volunteer his help. The lantern's red light moves at such pace that he must to run to catch up. While running toward the lantern, he slips and falls onto the track. Not expecting the Barich train until the morning, he is shocked to hear the "unmistakable rumble" of a fast approaching train. In seconds, he launches himself over an embankment, narrowly averting being run over. As the train disappears down the track, he hears "a scream, an inhuman howl that tore through the strong night. It hurled a

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., 263.

single word into the wind - 'Laakhan'."⁵⁰⁵ Disoriented he crawls back up onto the tracks and follows the lantern back to the signal-room only to knock himself unconscious while firing his rifle at the lantern. After dreaming about a conversation with the stationmaster, who, in the dream, pulls him out of the signal-room to safety, Phulboni wakes on a mattress lying on the path of the oncoming train and once again narrowly averts disaster.

On his return home, Phulboni recounts the previous night's adventures to the train's chief engineer. The engineer responds with bewilderment to Phulboni's account of the stationmaster's behavior and his near fatal encounter with the mystery train. He remarks that no other train uses those lines and that Renupur station had not had a stationmaster for over forty years. The chief engineer's comments transforms the way in which we read Renupur station, and by extension, the function of railways in the novel. For contrary to one's expectations, the station does not function simply as a stop in a complex network of stations between Calcutta and Barich. Rather, it is a site of mystery, a space where the technology of time and space is disrupted. Renupur arrests the metaphorical function of the railways as national referents. It surfaces as a node that accelerates and

⁵⁰⁵Ibid., 274.

directs movements that do not adhere to nationalist imaginaries. Phulboni's encounter with a train that does not adhere to the railway's bureaucratic function accedes to the belief that nation-states lend easily to mapping. Railways, like the novel or the passport, are less the conduits to clear destinations than routes away from and into the ever-shifting terrain of identity narratives.

Conclusion: The Mirror in the Labyrinth

The Calcutta Chromosome's use of the fantastic extends into the postcolonial present the images of time and space Tutuola inaugurated in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Like Tutuola's bush, Ghosh's Calcutta is a fluid space that exists outside the state's capturing machine. His use of malaria as subject and narrative technique renders unstable all loci of identity. His fluid inscription of identity suggests an imaginative disposition that counters both the cosmopolitan inspired identity narrative as well as the fixing of the Other within a medicalized discourse of difference. In his radical destabilizing of identity, Ghosh posits a temporal and spatial movement from within which encounters cannot be culturally or politically fixed. That is, contrary to the limited humanism that informs cosmopolitanism - a conception based on a civilization hierarchy in which the West

assumes a panoptic cultural position moving freely among identity while arresting the Other in developmental narratives - *The Calcutta Chromosome* uses Mangala's experiments to deconstruct civilizational and scientific myths responsible for cosmopolitan articulations.

Similarly, Ghosh's denial of the frontier that is central to the blues detective and the novels of the American West suggests a conception of Self that is not articulated in opposition, but in relation. The spaces Ghosh articulates are not the oppositional spaces demarcating the frontier between the United States and Mexico or the racial frontier of the blues detective urban scapes. In denying his characters geographically and culturally stable positions, Ghosh forces readers of *The Calcutta Chromosome* to reconceive identity narratives. He moves his readers to conceived of difference as always already within. In this, Ghosh echoes la Malinche's linguistic function. It reminds the reader that identity constructs are based on the misleading proposition that one is always present to one's utterances. Put differently, he negates the possibility that language is sufficient to the task of identity construction. Like Walter Benjamin's conception of translation, he suggests that language is always a stranger to itself. This pushes the reader into a nomadic plain in which identity is in a perennial state of becoming.

The Calcutta Chromosome's identity movement leads to a proliferation and celebration of entanglements. It neither accepts cosmopolitanism nor lends itself to the confines of the national. Its movements and displacements of identity force a renewed articulation of the political. For if identities are no longer stable locations from which to express a political position, the migrant disposition evinced by *The Calcutta Chromosome* pushes us towards a conception of politics that draws its legitimacy not from primordial claims, but from fluid utterances of wrongs. It is a political outlook that finds meaning in the fluid conceptions of self-articulated by Ben Okri and Jacques Rancière.

CHAPTER 6
 “FUZZY AGGREGATES”:
 THE FRACTAL POLITICS OF MIGRANCY

As an age, the postcolony encloses multiple *durée* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an *entanglement*.⁵⁰⁶

In her reading of globalization's impact on “the self-imagining of nation-states,” Emily Apter argues that Afrofuturism - an African-American movement that sought to reclaim “race aliens” - had “strategic reasons for appropriating and remotivating the visual vocabulary of elsewhere, up, out, and beyond.”⁵⁰⁷ Attuned to anxieties about identities produced by conditions of oppression, Afrofuturists, ranging from Sun Ra to George Clinton, construct post-nation-states “populated by citizens whose tribal loyalties and patriotic memories are subjectively intact but continentally adrift.”⁵⁰⁸ Theirs is a world of “alien nomads,” whose encounters dislocate national universalism, and set citizens adrift in a matrix of becoming-

⁵⁰⁶ Mbembe, 14.

⁵⁰⁷ Emily Apter, *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 225.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

other.⁵⁰⁹

Afrofuturism's alien nomadism, Apter argues, is both definition and enactment of Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology. The attention to the fragility of national identities and concern for the possibilities of other forms of being transforms the Afrofuturists' aesthetic projects into "scapelands": They are rhizomes that deterritorialize identity practices. Thus, she contends, Afrofuturism shares much with "postcolonial cyberpunk." Responding to similar socio-political forces, postcolonial cyberpunk attempts to move beyond the imperial and postcolonial by refracting identity through the cyber-fi genre. As evidence, she cites Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*. In Antar's search for L. Muragan, Apter finds a rhizome that "figures the beyond of postcolonial identity by combining Orientalism with DNA cyber-fi."⁵¹⁰

While I agree with Apter's reading of Ghosh, her consideration of the political possibilities of works like *The Calcutta Chromosome* fall short of the mark. Although her arguments about the deterritorializing possibilities of postcolonial cyberpunk are premised on nomadology, her reading arrests the nomadic impulses she celebrates. First, her understanding of the encounter between states and postcolonial

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 230.

nomads converts lines of flight into “movements of false liberty.”⁵¹¹ She reads the works of Raphaël Confiant, Amitav Ghosh, Samuel Delany, among others, as aesthetic projects that result in “a virtual space with distinctly urban scar tissue.”⁵¹² These projects, she contends, outline “the beyond” of statist identities. This construct is problematic, however, in that it rests on too dialectical an understanding of encounters. The political power of works like *The Calcutta Chromosome* is not that they offer a beyond, but that they fragment postcolonial and imperial identities.

Second, Apter falls prey to a classical deficit of discourses concerning the political role of minority and oppressed populations. Focusing primarily on African-Americans, she endows their political marginality with a nationally redemptive quality. Their Afrofuturist visions and cyberpunk dreams engender imaginative solutions that will, in the end, redeem the nation-state’s body politics. Writing about Samuel R. Delany’s *Dhalgren*, she notes,

Delany’s race aliens remind us that ‘African-Americans, in a very real sense, are the descendants of alien abductees,’ even as they become the organic fiber of the nomadological worldscape, part of the deep space that is impossible to detect but that holds the

⁵¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13.

⁵¹² Apter, 232.

atmosphere, part of the air that is breathed or not breathed, part of the wildly black market of its absent economy, part of the global compass set to readjust worldview.⁵¹³

This reading allocates to Africa-Americans the responsibility, consciously or not, of readjusting the worldview. By doing so, Apter returns to a linear conception of the political. Her emplacement counteracts the rhizomic, substituting nomadology with a neo-Hegelian conception that holds the underclass responsible for its liberation and for that of its oppressor. Moreover, it also suggests that lines of flight are definite, denying the unpredictability of the political processes of encounter.

In this concluding chapter, I use Jacques Rancière and Ben Okri to move beyond gestures like Apter's. I suggest below that politics of migrancy does not result from predicated lines of flight, but from movements of intensity.⁵¹⁴ The migrant's political community is always already a fractured unity, a "fuzzy aggregate." As Rancière notes, "the demos, or people, is at the same time the name of a community and the name for its division."⁵¹⁵ Political communities are thus best understood as

⁵¹³ Ibid., 236.

⁵¹⁴ For a discussion of intensity in the formation of politics as plateaus, see Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 7-8.

⁵¹⁵ Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectification," *October*, no. 61 (1992): 59.

spatio-temporal events, subject to fluid social negotiations. Ben Okri's Azaro trilogy illustrates this by constructing a political landscape where subjectivities are always already in motion and the political is a product of unforeseen contingencies.

Of Police and Politics

Echoing the experiences and works of Joseph Jacotot, Jacques Rancière asserts the existence of a virtual equality as a necessary starting point for the political. His belief is not, however, educated by the Jeffersonian ideal. He does not presuppose a foundational equality. Rancière rejects the notion of inequality as a deviation from a natural state that can be remedied through the agency of cultural elites. Rather, he suggests, the spatial and temporal distance that informs this view – the conviction that through diligent work differences will be overcome in time – is responsible for “erecting and maintaining the distances separating a future reconciliation from a present inequality.”⁵¹⁶ For him, therefore, equality “is a universal that must be supposed, verified, and demonstrated in

⁵¹⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), xix.

each case."⁵¹⁷

Rancière's belief in equality as an existing universal reformulates the political. It enacts a distinction between what he terms police and politics. His conception of police deviates from conventional understandings. For Rancière, police is a neutral concept. It does not figure the state as an apparatus of control, but stands as a discursive formation. He writes:

The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.⁵¹⁸

Through language games, police orders erect strict zones of exclusion. Thus, unlike Michel Foucault, Rancière's police do not discipline bodies. Rather, they assemble occupations and delimits the spaces in which these are deployed.

The police formulation of subjectivity as emplacements gives rise to politics as agonistic discourses. The exclusions resulting from police orders incite space clearing movements, which actualize in performances that render the invisible, visible and the silent, audible. In its oppositionality,

⁵¹⁷ Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectification," 60.

⁵¹⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998),

politics is a mode of subjectification.⁵¹⁹ By mobilizing against socio-economic and cultural exclusions, political actors create new fields of meaning and order, which they enter as fully intelligible subjects. However, insofar as subjectification is the product of a spatial and temporal convergence of forces, politics is neither stable nor predictable. As Rancière notes:

Politics . . . does not recognize relationships between citizens and the state. It only recognizes the mechanisms and singular manifestations by which a certain citizenship occurs but never belongs to individuals as such.⁵²⁰

Politics as agon does not, however, unfold through binarisms. While formulated in oppositional enactments, it fulfills its potential only by denaturing the logic of existing arrangements. The political is thus not merely an opposition that reconfigures relationships of power. But, more importantly,

political activity is always a mode of expression that undergoes the perceptible divisions of the police order by implementing a basically heterogeneous assumption that, at the end of the day, itself demonstrates the sheer contingency of the order, the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being.⁵²¹

Rancière thus rejects the political as a priori structures of encounter and becoming. For an action to be political, he notes, "it must give rise to a meeting of police logic and egalitarian

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⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 35.⁵²⁰ Ibid., 31.⁵²¹ Ibid., 30.

logic that is never set up in advance.”⁵²² That is, it must be a product of the encounter between striated and smooth spaces, resulting not merely in the reformation of “police logic” or of “egalitarian logic,” but in the alteration of both. It must produce yet unimagined social and political arrangements.

The imperative of Rancière’s conception enacts a fractal politics. For insofar as he views equality not as an a priori, but as a concept to be asserted and verified, he transforms his politics into a nomadology. The affirmation of equality through imaginative reconfigurations of the political produces a perennial movement of subjectivity. Every act that seeks to correct a wrong is likely to commit a wrong. Every gesture of redress frames and legitimates a discursive practice while threatening to silence others. The search for equality thus enacts a fractal politics. It results in a recursive play of exclusion and inclusion that produces multiplicities of “fuzzy aggregates”: it generates political formations that resist identification.

Rancière’s fractal politics establishes a line of distinction between identity and subjectivity. Individuals who aggregate to address wrongs produce subjectivities, but not identities. Their encounter and aggregation is a byproduct of a

⁵²² Ibid., 32.

non-recognition. They inhabit an in-between that relies "on a crossing of names: names that link the names of a group or class to the name of no groups or no class, a being to a nonbeing or not-yet-being."⁵²³ That is, insofar as subjectification is the object of an in-between-ness, it renders identification impossible. This is the fate of postcolonial migrants.

The postcolonial migrant dwells in the in-between-ness of national identities. She exists between a present to which she does not fully belong and a past to which she cannot return. While this in-between-ness denies her national identification, it also resists service in the reaffirmation of national identities. Her experiences of movement endow her with a memory that exceeds the narrow bounds of the national, making her presence transformative. In her wanderings, she promises to imagine ways of being-in-the-world that exceed the police order of nation-states.

Being at Home in a Fragmented World

As previous chapters show, there are numerous loci and vantages from which to observe the migrant's disruptive subjectivities. It is manifest in the failure of cosmopolitanism to domesticate differences through the construction of false

⁵²³ Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectification,"

universals. It is equally current in Canada's fears that Colette Matshimoseka was the carrier of a virus that threatened to weaken its body politics from the inside. These instances evince the disruptive capacity of the migrant's presence and suggest novel ways in which they force a rethinking of collectivities. In the remainder of the essay, however, I want to turn to the work of Ben Okri to look at how migrants construct beings that are at home in a fragmented and fragmenting world.

Okri's preoccupation with the nightmares of identity makes his writings an interesting subject for such an analysis. In his drive to waken the nation from its destructive nightmare, he exposes Nigeria's colonial and postcolonial wounds to daylight by refracting them through familiar myths. However, contrary to Nigerian writers of an earlier generation, his use of myth is decidedly less concerned with patrimony and authenticity. His use of the Abiku myth in *The Famished Road* cycle attests to this disposition.⁵²⁴

The Abiku is the embodiment of Rancière's "not-yet-being." As concept metaphor, it has a plurality of meanings. First, it is a concept used in various West African cultures to denote children who have tenuous relationships to the world of the

61.

⁵²⁴ See Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), Okri, *Songs of Enchantment*, Ben Okri, *Infinite Riches* (London: Phoenix House, 1998).

living. The Abiku exist in a permanent in-between: between the living and the spirit world; between the present, the past, and the future. Second, the Abiku has a more anthropological meaning. In societies where too many children succumb to illnesses within the first year of their birth, it is a concept-metaphor that lends meaning to unbearable loss.

The poetic use of the Abiku as a concept metaphor is not, however, confined to the works of Okri alone. We find the theme present in much of Nigerian writing. It is present in the works of Wole Soyinka, especially the poem "The Famished Road," in the works of John Pepa Clark, and in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. There is, however, a marked difference between Okri's and Achebe's uses of the myth, for example. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs the Abiku in an auto-ethnography. He uses the concept to explain the success of British mythic and religious narratives among the Igbo. Achebe employs the Abiku and a variety of other myths to explicate Igbo social hierarchies. Myths, such as those governing the birth of twins or of children with congenital birth defects, he maintains, fragmented the population. It thus made affected populations attentive to missionary narratives, which promised a replacement metaphysics wherein there would be no such divisions.

Okri uses the Abiku in a very different fashion: in his work, the Abiku marks all births as moments of exile. The

Abiku's unsettling movements refract Rancière's political subjectification. As Azaro, the protagonist of *The Famished Road* cycle, notes, "To be born is to come into the world weighed down with strange gifts of the soul, with enigmas and an inextinguishable sense of exile."⁵²⁵ Okri's affirmation of birth as haunted by memory echoes Michel Foucault's assertion that "what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity."⁵²⁶ Azaro, much like the postcolonial migrant, embodies this disparity. He is haunted by memories of the spirit world and by cycles of births and histories that bleed into one another disrupting all possibilities of identity formation. He dwells in the in-between, alert to the songs of the spirit world, and attuned to histories and memories of countless births. The Abiku's subjectivity is marked by an antecedent that colors his experience of the present, suggesting that all subjectifications are always already haunted by a history of previous encounters.

Unlike Achebe and Soyinka, Okri places his character not in the service of identity or national history, but enacts through Azaro a way of being in the world that celebrates the turbulent spaces of encounter. He accomplishes this not through narrative

⁵²⁵ Okri, *The Famished Road*, 5.

⁵²⁶ Bouchard, ed., 142.

plot alone, but by transforming himself and his works into signs of the Abiku. Much like Azaro, Okri navigates between London and Lagos, tracing the historical arcs of Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo, as well as the history of England. He dwells in-between the Nigerian and British identities. His nomadism structures his works as intertexts. As Olatubosun Ogunsanwo asserts,

Remarkably, there is no simple, unproblematic merging into one single monolithic discourse, as they remain distinct even while intermingling. In other words, there is no assimilation of one narrative mode by the other, or of one genre by the other. In short, no centralized sameness. The narrative technique does not seek any oppositional stance: the intertexts assume parallel status in the parodic re-working of the narrative modes, debunking the mutual exclusivity of center and margin.⁵²⁷

His texts are nodes where histories and styles intercept. As an author, he is thus as much a creator as he is a medium through whom history, languages, and cultures flow.

Okri's intertextual disposition opens up a space for a larger sense of memory. His works are not intertextual by accident or merely as an extension of his social and cultural location. Through his works, Okri adopts the intertextual as a mode of being. Through dialogues between Western narrative forms and African oral and mythic narratives, he deconstructs Western

⁵²⁷ Olatubosun Ogunsanwo, "Intertextuality and Post-Colonial Literature in Ben Okri's *the Famished Road*," *Research in African Literature* 26, no. 1 (1995): 45.

archetypes of belonging. Ogunsanwo notes:

In this postmodern spirit, as it were, postcolonial literature (from Ngugi wa Thiong'o to Okri) has attempted to challenge and debunk the legitimizing narrative archetypes of Western culture and its dominant ideology. It is the hidden power relations behind humanism and positivist systems underlying the tenets and practices of "linear . . . tight" literary realism that Okri criticizes.⁵²⁸

His intertextual gestures clear spaces for narratives that exceed territorializing movements. They make possible for infinite multiplications of stories, while resisting the impulse to smooth over differences.

Conclusion: Finding Politics in a Fragmented World

Okri's intertextuality evinces a pragmatic being in the world. His movements are not encumbered by fears of inauthenticity. His poetics exceeds anxieties about mimicry. Rather, insofar as his aesthetic project understands identities, all births, as moments of exiles, he delegitimizes the very notion of unalloyed identities. The self he scripts navigates a stream of histories and memories that are always in tension, and thus do not sediment in the national. In the movement of ideas and cultures, he is equally at home in English as in Yoruba.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.: 41.

In rejecting fixity and adopting fluid movements and repetitions, Okri engages in a Sycoraxian disruption. He engenders a politics predicated not in a national being, but in a being-in-between. It "is the formation of a one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to an other."⁵²⁹ The heterology that derives from Okri's aesthetic projects encapsulates the political possibilities of migrancy. It suggests not predicable movements of identity, but recursive subjectivities that move toward a totality of being. It speaks to a universality that "is not enclosed in *citizen* or *human beings*," but "in the 'what follows,' in its discursive and practical enactment."⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectification," 61.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*: 60.

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