Le Simplegadi

Special Issue

Cultures and Imperialisms

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Traveling with Said (in 2013)

2013 marked not only twenty years since the publication of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993, but also ten years since the Palestinian-American scholar's passing in 2003. This is one of the reasons why so many events were planned in Europe and the US to celebrate this extraordinary man, literary theorist and public intellectual, and why we wish to engage with his important work in the present issue of this journal.

Further 'Saidean' anniversaries may also be mentioned, remembering it was 1963 when a young Said joined Columbia University in New York City, as a member of the Departments of English and of Comparative Literature, and that thirty years have passed since the publication of his powerful reflections in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983). These dates are listed not just in a celebratory mood, but rather to stress the unavoidable presence of Edward Said on the world's intellectual stage over the last forty years. For someone belonging to my generation, who grew up intellectually and academically in the 1980s-early 1990s, Said has been a constant presence, an accompanying hand, and an infinite source of intellectual wonder and inspiration.

Culture and Imperialism was chosen as the reference point for the essays that follow not only to pay homage to the author of a book that has been seminal to the way we read literature and study culture, but also to ask how that book has travelled with us, in what way it has fertilized our thinking, and how the upshots of that book's inspiration have in turn fostered reflections on the original work.

The question of course has to do with a number of things: with reading practices, with the life of cultures, and with theory itself and how it travels. What I have always admired in Said's work is the continuous dialogue with the intellectuals that preceded him and also with those who shared his own time; his

constant reminder that ideas are not just in the air, they are not just there for us to pick them up and use whenever or wherever we find them, but that they have an existence of their own, they come from somewhere, and what we do with them must necessarily be accompanied by that knowledge, that awareness of their presence in space and time and in the work of others.

Talking about 'traveling theory', Said points out that the movement of ideas from one culture to another is never 'unimpeded'. It involves processes of representation and institutionalization different from those at the point of origin, which complicate any account of transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce of original thoughts and concepts. In a sort of generalization, in his famous essay on "Traveling Theory", Said identifies a recurrent pattern in the movement itself, four stages common to the way any theory or idea travels:

> First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance traversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions – call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea [...] Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place (Said 1983: 226-227).

Keeping that in mind, the following critical contributions look at both local uses and revisions of Said's work for contemporary time in Italy and Europe, and also at a number of geo-political spaces that a Saidean perspective has helped to open up globally or trans-culturally; they discuss how we can now draw a new cartography, unstable and dynamic, of the planet. But this has not occurred,

does not occur, without adjustments or critique, as Said notices in the above quote and as the collected papers show.

The history of Said's own work travelling to many places of the globe has not been unimpeded, as happened in Italy for example, where the reception of his books has often involved resistance. The orientalist scholar Francesco Gabrieli was very critical of Said's method and results in *Orientalism*, while *Culture and Imperialism* was received with suspicion and sometimes with open refusal on the part of philosophers and historians, though of course both texts have been central to the work of postcolonial and cultural studies scholars, particularly dealing with Anglophone literatures and cultures.

In recent years, the work of Giorgio Baratta (see his preface to the Italian edition of *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* and afterword to *Culture and Imperialism*), Miguel Mellino (2009) and Marco Gatto (2012), among others, have done much to appraise Said's work for the local academic community and readers. They have discussed lights and shadows in his contribution, but definitely shown how inevitable his voice is for anyone interested in literature, music and the arts, the workings of culture, the role of the intellectual, and for world politics too. Most importantly, the weight of Said's radical humanism has now come to the foreground for many Italian scholars, as well as the implications of the linking of poetics and ethics, philology and political responsibility.

One of the things I would like to add about Said in this context is that I am very grateful not only for his travelling ideas, but also because he made other thinkers' ideas travel. I think it is possible to say without risking hyperbole that it was Edward Said who made Antonio Gramsci's philosophy travel not only worldwide, but back to Italy, too, for many of us.

As we can see in the work done at various centres, particularly in the South of Italy, Said and Gramsci, or Gramsci through Said, have fostered new studies on our own culture and of cultures from the global South. I will just

mention the work done in Naples by Iain Chambers and his group (2006) or at the University of Bari, for example, by Bruno Brunetti and Roberto Derobertis (2009). Said has had the merit of moving Gramsci out of a rather stale institutional location in Italian politics and philosophy, and has offered him up to new intellectual usages, signalling, along the way, how the position of the intellectual and his work is always, and possibly must be, predicated between inside and outside.

Because to travel with theory means to be in transit, to be always out of place, to be of and not of a country: it means to see the complexity of every place and every language, as they come under scrutiny from different angles, and as they are exposed to the interrogations that come from elsewhere.

I am not saying that Said is the only intellectual who has worked like this, nor is he the only figure whose work has been so momentous for us all in recent years. Alongside *Culture and Imperialism*, for example, another crucial volume came out in 1993 that has since had a tremendous impact on the way we think about modernity: I am referring to Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*, which is another 'traveling' book, born out of displacement and movement, and first sounding an important field of inquiry for a great number of scholars to follow. In many ways the last two decades have gifted us with models of intellectual and cultural inquiry which are nurtured by travelling, by exile, and by a network of multiple epistemological linkages and traditions, which keep inspiring our academic efforts and vision, and also inform the scholarly work in this selection of critical essays.

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Said's Contrapuntal Reading and the Event of Postcolonial Literature

Abstract I: This article aims at exploring recent theories on the postcolonial literary text as 'event' and their echoes of Edward Said's formulation of the 'contrapuntal reading'. Taking life writing and Salman Rushdie's *Joseph Anton* (2012) in particular as case study, the article will show how discourses surrounding the publishing and reception of postcolonial writers must be considered as part of the reading experience, as clearly emerges when the works deal with public discourses such as the 'Rushdie affair'. Following this lead, the paper offers an interpretation of the literary work as a performative act in the complex nexus of discourses constituting the postcolonial writer as a figure of the global collective imaginary.

Abstract II: Questo saggio intende esplorare come recenti teorie sul testo letterario quale 'evento' rieccheggino la formulazione della 'lettura contrappuntistica' di Edward Said: entrambe queste metodologie, infatti, individuano il momento della lettura come centrale per l'esistenza del testo, che vive solo in un intreccio di relazioni metatestuali. Prende quindi in considerazione *Joseph Anton* (2012) di Salman Rushdie per mostrare come i discorsi intorno alla pubblicazione e ricezione di scrittrici e scrittori postcoloniali vanno considerati parte dell'esperienza di lettura, in particolar modo nel caso di un discorso pubblico di grande risonanza come il 'caso Rushdie'. Propone infine di interpretare il testo letterario come atto performativo all'interno del complesso intreccio di discorsi che costituiscono lo scrittore postcoloniale come figura dell'immaginario collettivo globale.

When Anglo-Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif addressed the audience of the ESSE conference in Istanbul on September 6, 2012, she narrated the inception of her latest book *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* (2012), which describes the eighteen days of the Egyptian revolution. Many years before, Soueif had agreed to write a book about Cairo, but the work never had the chance to come into existence until, after the events of February 2011, her publisher Alexandra Pringle called her and told her this was the moment for her "Cairo book". The event represents a typical performative moment in the current literary landscape, that of a writer speaking at an international conference; the story, told in much the same terms as in the preface from the book (Soueif 2012: xiii) also points to the text itself as an 'event' happening due to a complex and diverse set of agents – the writer, the publisher, and of course readers eager to know more about the 'Arab spring'.

Soueif's case shows how a literary text is not to be read or interpreted – or even written – but performed into being by the act of reading, as Derek Attridge has recently argued: "the inventive literary work […] should be thought of as an ethically charged event, one that befalls individual readers and, at the same time, the culture within which, and through which, they read" (Attridge 2005: xi) (1). This framework, I will argue, echoes Edward Said's own formulation of contrapuntal reading' in three important ways: first of all, both theories individuate the act of reading as the *locus* where the literary text happens; secondly, they postulate the existence of the text as a web of relations to other texts, a relation activated by individual readers who can in this way read 'contrapuntally'; and finally, both stress the ethical resonance of the reading: "the event of the literary work can have powerful effects on its readers, and through them, on the cultural and political environment" (Attridge 2005: xii).

Still, where Attridge's theory aims at encompassing the literary text in general (2), counterpointing his agenda with Said's helps in exploring the consequences of renewed attention to reception in postcolonial literature,

where the public role of the intellectual complicates the way the event of the text 'happens' to the reader (3). Soueif's account of the 'making of' her latest literary effort addresses two strongly interrelated functions a postcolonial literary work is expected to fulfill today. On the one hand, the book is written to offer information on a non-Western country to an English-speaking audience from the point of view of an insider, a 'native informant' or an 'organic intellectual' (4). On the other, *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* also works as a consumer product on the global cultural market by addressing a highly topical subject such as the Arab spring, as the publisher's pressure on the writer clearly shows.

These two drives mirror Graham Huggan's dichotomy between postcolonialism and postcoloniality, which will be addressed below; yet Soueif's book also introduces a third element. By drawing constant attention to the chronological time of reading the book repeatedly stages the encounter between reader and text: "We now have this information [on the follow-up of the revolution]. You, my reader, in more advanced form as you read these words than I as I race to write them in the summer of 2011" (Soueif 2012: 8). Starting from the crucible from which Soueif's book emerges, my aim is to elaborate some preliminary considerations on 'the postcolonial' as what Judith Butler has defined as a "performative" by looking at Huggan's elaborations on the postcolonial exotic, and then intersecting it with Said's foundational work on the role of contrapuntal reading, using Salman Rushdie's recent memoir *Joseph Anton* (2012) as case study.

Butler's work on performativity can find resonance in postcolonial literature: the postcolonial may be defined as a performative in Butler's sense of "a discursive practice that enacts or produces what it names" (Butler 1993: xxi). More specifically, with its entrance in the public discourse both in the publishing industry and the academia, the postcolonial has emerged as a process of repetition – of stereotypes, discourses, and all performative acts – which, to use Butler's words again, "enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition

for the subject" (Butler 1993: 95). In this sense, Soueif's tale of the 'behind the scenes' of the publishing mechanism gives her readers and audience a glimpse of the enabling context for her writing process and her own positioning as a writer during the Arab spring in Egypt. Yet Soueif also describes her book as an attempt "to 'revolute' and write at the same time" (Soueif 2012: xiv), thus weaving a double bind between revolution and writing; and it is this marketability of her account of the revolution that remains problematic in its location between revolutionary narrative and global cultural politics, or, we might say with Graham Huggan, between postcolonialism and postcoloniality.

In his *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001), Huggan elaborates a binary dynamic between postcolonialism as "an ensemble of loosely connected oppositional practices" endorsing an aesthetic of "largely textualized […] resistance" (Huggan 2001: 6), and postcoloniality as "a system of symbolic, as well as material exchange in which even the language of resistance may be manipulated and consumed" (Huggan 2001: 6). This dichotomy immediately brings to mind Said's own dichotomy in *Culture and Imperialism* between the "consolidated vision" of European empires and the "resistance and opposition" it met in the colonies (5); only now the consolidated vision appears to be that of postcoloniality itself which has absorbed the postcolonial rhetoric of resistance as just another consumer product. Yet, as in the Saidian vision hegemony and subalternity are to be experienced in counterpoint to one another, in Huggan's vision postcolonialism and postcoloniality are not just opposite attitudes towards the postcolonial: the two visions are "mutually entangled" (Huggan 2001: 6), constantly working one alongside and against the other; they exist, to use Saidean terminology again, as overlapping territories where hegemony and resistance coexist on the very terrain of postcolonial literature.

This last category – 'postcolonial literature' – shows the potentiality and difficulties of Said's legacy to the contemporary critic and scholar. One of the main challenges in working on contemporary postcolonial literature as a

performative event is to face the difficulties presented by the heterogeneity of textualities which have up to now contributed to my work on the topic: *Cairo* is a diary of the days of the protest by an Egyptian woman writer living between London and Cairo; *Summertime: Scenes from Provincial Life* is the last instalment of a fictional autobiography trilogy by J. M. Coetzee, the white South African Nobel Prize winner now relocated in Australia; *Dancing in the Dark* is the fictional biography of Bahamian-American actor Bert Williams by Caryl Phillips, a writer born in St. Kitts, raised in Leeds and now living between the UK and the US; while *Joseph Anton* by Salman Rushdie, which will be the case study for this essay, introduced arguably the most gossiped about Indo-English writer into this already rather heterogeneous body of texts.

This wide-ranging landscape is very much indebted to the most criticized aspects of Said's work: what Huggan, following Aijaz Ahmad's argument in his *In Theory* (1992) calls "commercial third-worldism" (Huggan 2001: 19). Said's point in *Culture and Imperialism* that by reading Genet or Rushdie one can "think and experience" (Said 1993: 385) Palestine, Algeria or India – the reader's own gender, nationality or ethnicity notwithstanding – is met by Huggan with the suspicion that this approach may actually assume that such experiences are indeed interchangeable, as if their cultural and social backgrounds were to be considered essentially similar because non-Western or Third-Worldist; moreover, Said also apparently equates reading with mere book consumption – the more texts by the more 'exotic' writers one reads, the better the reader's experience (Huggan 2001: 19).

However, one has just to turn to the theory and practice of contrapuntal reading to find the ethical positioning of Said's wide-ranging corpus. This new (at the time) paradigm voiced – among other things – the need to register the contradictions arising from such a wide and diverse literary landscape as the one Said encompasses in his critical practice; it also exposes the impossibility, if not the unwillingness, to reduce this diversity to an organic whole. In this sense,

as Benita Parry argues, *Culture and Imperialism* is an 'impossible' book, based on "a fondness for contrapuntalism as a signifier of the unexpected and arresting juxtaposition of incongruent concepts and disparate categories" (Parry 2010: 506). Said's legacy for postcolonial literary studies is this possibility to think diverse and divergent texts and writers together while not necessarily considering them homogeneous or reducible to a single paradigm. While writers such as Soueif and Rushdie do not share the same cultural background, political stance or even loosely comparable 'writing styles', putting them in counterpoint to one another allows to find unexpected consonances.

One common ground between *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* and *Joseph Anton* is the use of autobiographical material, which also emerges as a key issue of postcolonial writing, one which has seen a precursor in Said himself. In his *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*, David Huddart retraces the many critiques to Said's public persona, from Ahmed's highlighting of the class privilege behind this capability of situating himself to Weiner's suggestion that some inconsistencies in his account would undermine Said's own claim to a Palestinian identity (Huddart 2006: 13-21). Still, more than grounding the self in the authority of truthfulness, autobiography in Said's own writing exemplifies "a kind of invention of personal and communal beginnings – and it is an invention that, under limitations of various kinds, is undergoing constant denial and is therefore constantly re-starting, repeating itself with variations" (Huddart 2006: 45).

Authorial identity, whether in fiction or criticism, is thus an 'invention', a function of writing itself; and of course, as Timothy Brennan states, "Said's identity as a Palestinian is paramount to his performance" (quot. in Huddart 2006: 33). This performance necessarily relies on a public, that is, on readers and their ability to put the biographical 'facts' related to Said's Palestinian positioning in relation with a plethora of other sources of information on the writer. Hence, the apparent contrast between truthfulness and invention –

between the necessary reliance on biographical facts and the acknowledgement of the equally unavoidable fact of narration – finds a resolution in reading as a relational event: the literary and critical work 'happens' (to use Attridge's terminology) to the reader in her/his individual encounter with the postcolonial text, or with 'the postcolonial' – work, writer, theory – as text. In this event the performative of the postcolonial takes shape as a constant negotiation between postcolonialism and postcoloniality (as defined by Huggan), in that empowering and prescriptive space which requires authors to conform to the Third World writer public persona to enter the English-speaking global literary landscape.

Going back to Butler's definition of the performative, postcoloniality may be considered as the enabling temporal condition for the 'postcolonial writer' subject; yet postcolonialism's contrapuntal reading allows for postcoloniality's fractures and fissures to emerge. Said's well-known formulation states that "as we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 1993: 194); re-reading Said's lines today, contrapuntal reading may be reinterpreted as a way of reading performatively – reading postcoloniality with an awareness of its role in the global cultural archive against and together with postcolonialism as anti-(neo)colonial practice.

In particular, postcolonial life writing excites contrapuntal reading because it taps into readers' previous knowledge of facts and events in such a way that the appeal for truth is not as important as exploring another version of the story. This emerges rather clearly in Rushdie's *Joseph Anton*, the writer's recent memoir on the fatwa years (6). Here the question of the fatwa emerges as essentially linked to the question of reading (Newman 2009: 38), of how different people from many and diverse cultural backgrounds have read *The

Satanic Verses in deeply different and equally affecting ways; these readings have in their turn produced narratives on and about Rushdie, and one of the main themes in *Joseph Anton* is precisely the overlapping of different readings of 'Rushdie' – the writer on the cover but also the narrating character in the novel. The book hence engages the reader in its own storytelling by directly addressing the writer's own public image as circulated in the media, hence exposing the book's own narrative – if not entirely fictional – discourse.

Differently from the deeply affecting first person narrating Soueif's experience of the Arab Spring, *Joseph Anton* is narrated in a strictly male third person which has been defined as "de Gaulle-like" (Heller 2012), but in the context of postcolonial life writing also reminds one of the narrative devices chosen by J. M. Coetzee in his memoirs. Two of the three instalments of the South African writer's *Scenes from Provincial Life* feature a third-person narrative by a main character called John M. Coetzee (Coetzee 1997, Coetzee 2002), who gives a partial and explicitly incomplete account of the main events of the writer's early life (7). Rushdie's narrator strikes a rather different note, though, as he thinks of the possibility to write his story in the not-too-near future: after musing on turning it into "something other than simple autobiography", he resolves otherwise: "After a while he abandoned this idea. The only reason his story was interesting was that it had actually happened. It wouldn't be interesting if it wasn't true" (Rushdie 2012: 340-41) (8).

Yet the 'truth' in *Joseph Anton* is necessarily intertwined with the process of storytelling: as the narrator points out, "The storytelling animal must be free to tell his tales" (Rushdie 2012: 361). Naturally, freedom is a contested term in the fatwa years, and the narrator spends many pages discussing the issue of freedom of speech in the face of both open and covert censorship (9); yet *Joseph Anton* also points to the empowerment coming from the ability to manipulate the stories told about 'Rushdie', especially by the media. In a move remindful of Said's own remarks about the dichotomy embedded in his own

name (10), the narrator finds his own self torn between 'Salman' and 'Rushdie': "He was aware that the splitting in him was getting worse, the divide between what 'Rushdie' needed to do and how 'Salman' wanted to live" (Rushdie 2012: 251). 'Rushdie' is the name talked about, the scapegoat of public discourses about the fatwa:

> 'Rushdie' was a dog. 'Rushdie', according to the private comments of many eminent persons, including the Prince of Wales, who made these comments over lunch to his friends Martin Amis and Clive James, deserved little sympathy. 'Rushdie' deserved everything he got, and needed to do something to undo the great harm that he had done. 'Rushdie' needed to stop insisting on paperbacks and principles and literature and being in the right. 'Rushdie' was much hated and little loved. He was an effigy, an absence, something less than human. He – it – needed only to expiate (Rushdie 2012: 252).

The last shift between 'he' and 'it', between the male third person which also marks the narrator's voice and the neuter pronoun identifying the object of narration marks the overlap between writer and character, the one who is written about and the one whose life commitment has been to write about others. This living paradox is embodied by Joseph Anton, the secret name under which Rushdie lived during the fatwa years, chosen by the writer himself by putting side by side the first names of his two favourite writers, Conrad and Chekhov. The character-writer – the narrator 'Salman Rushdie' – confronts his own fictional nature through the act of naming himself anew: "He had spent his life naming fictional characters. Now by naming himself he had turned himself into a sort of fictional character as well" (Rushdie 2012: 165).

Joseph Anton also remarks the diffuse nature of agency embedded in a text deeply dependant on other, multiple textualities, and on the readers' knowledge of what during the years has become known as the 'Rushdie affair'.

The book writes back to each and every politician, journalist or writer who has written on the fatwa, whether to support Rushdie or to criticize his work or attitude, in order to reclaim the authority of the writer on his own image (11). Yet, as the narrator realizes when informed that Gabriel Garcìa Marquez is writing a novel based on his life (a novel that will never be published), he realises that reclaiming authority over his own life may prove an impossible task: "He was to be someone else's 'novelisation' now? If the roles were reversed he would not have felt he had the right to come between another writer and his own life story. But his life had perhaps become everyone's property" (Rushdie 2012: 408).

The only possibility for the fictional Salman Rushdie to reclaim his own story, a story that has become 'everyone's property' is not, or not necessarily, by 'telling the truth', the book's reliance on the truthfulness of the account notwithstanding. As the narrator stresses in more than one occasion, the only power left to him in his utterly disempowered state is the power of storytelling. As a contemporary, male Sharāzād, he quickly acknowledges he needs to feed the media a different story to keep himself, and public attention on his case, alive: "it was […] a time of rapid change, in which no subject held the attention for very long. […] *Tell us a new story*, that was the general opinion, *or else please go away*. […] So, yes, a new story. If that was what was wanted, that was what he would provide" (Rushdie 2012: 337).

Joseph Anton is a conspicuous example of how postcolonial life writing invites a Saidean contrapuntal reading by constantly highlighting its fictional nature, including a complex web of metatextual references that only the act of reading can activate. Its extensive reference to the event of reading as constitutive of the text emerges not only in the wide-ranging reference to other texts (12), but also through a constant reference to the practice of reading. For example, reviews on *Fury* identifying its main character Malik Solanka as proxy for the writer leads the narrator to muse again on the relationship between writer and character:

It was puzzling that in both cases [Malik Solanka and Saladin Chamcha from *The Satanic Verses*] these characters whom he had written to be other than himself were read by many people as simple self-portraits. But Stephen Dedalus was not Joyce, and Herzog was not Bellow, and Zuckerman was not Roth, and Marcel was not Proust; writers had always worked close to the bull, like matadors, had played complex games with autobiography, and yet their creations were more interesting than themselves. Surely this was known. But what was known could also be forgotten. He had to rely on the passage of the years to clear things up (Rushdie 2012: 596).

It is indeed interesting – at least to my postcolonially-oriented reading eye – that among all the writers the narrator quotes in this cursory overview of character-writer mirrorings, 'Salman Rushdie' is the only one which could be defined postcolonial by contemporary academic standards, and *also* the one picked up as an example of the apparent inevitability of the autobiographical reading – as if postcolonial literature could not but reflect discourses surrounding the writer's public persona. Yet the conclusion of the argument handles final judgement onto the reader – today's readers as well as future ones, in a gesture erupting from the page and from the temporal scope of the narrative. The explicit location of the text in the ephemeral moment of reading deprives the word on the page of its claim to authority and ontological fixedness; in this way, it questions the codes of postcoloniality as a marketing strategy, reinstating the centrality of Said's theoretical insights for contemporary postcolonial practices.

NOTES

1. Although Attridge does not refer directly to Deleuze's formulation, I still think it useful to borrow Cliff Stagoll's definition of the Deleuzian event as "instantaneous productions intrinsic to interactions between various kinds of forces" (Parr 2005: 87).

2. Attridge's own work actually stems from his reading of J. M. Coetzee, as emerges from his twin monographs from 2004 and 2005; still the central example from his 2011 essay expanding on the performativity of the literary text comes from Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1985), and the essay does not make any reference to postcolonial literature as a field with any specific relation to the argument explored there.

3. This essay will principally focus on life writing as the place where the public persona of the writer and the experience of the text overlap, creating some peculiarly visible conditions for the 'event' of literature to happen. Yet this does not exclude other, more elusive textual self-positionings which enact in the text the role of the 'public intellectual', such as those where another public figure is the subject of the author's life writing as proxy for her/his own. This happens, for example, in Caryl Phillips's *Dancing in the Dark* (2006), as I have elsewhere argued (Guarracino 2012).

4. I am borrowing these definitions from two very different fields, which both contribute to the discussion on the role of the postcolonial intellectual I will be addressing in the following pages. The term 'native informant' comes from ethnography, where it defines "a figure who […] can only provide data, to be interpreted by the knowing subject for reading" (Spivak 1999: 49); Spivak has notoriously appropriated the term to define "the limited access to being-human" of the postcolonial subject (Spivak 1999: 30). 'Organic intellectual', on the other hand, is a Gramscian definition used by Stuart Hall to describe the role of the postcolonial intellectual as bearing "the responsibility of

transmitting those ideas [...] to those who do not belong, professionally, in the intellectual class" (Hall 1992: 281).

5. Here I am referring to the titles from two of the sections in Said's *Culture and Imperialism*: the first, "Consolidated Vision", looks at the "structure of attitude and reference" (Said 1993: 62) integrating the empire in nineteenth century British literature; while "Resistance and Opposition" looks at the "charting of cultural territory" at the heart of the "ideological resistance" to the empires (Said 1993: 252).

6. It is not in the scope of this essay to review the fatwa proclaimed on Rushdie by Ayatollah Khomeini on 14 February 1989; discussions on the events and its aftermath can be found in Swan 1991 and Ranasinha 2007. On the other hand, it must be noted that *Joseph Anton* has received up to now very sparse critical attention, mostly limited to book reviews (see Blackburn 2012, Drabble 2012, and Heller 2012).

7. I will not be able here to expand on Coetzee's own life writing, which I have recently analysed in the framework of recent performance theory (Guarracino 2014).

8. The same preoccupation with truth emerges later on in a related exchange with Doris Lessing: "Doris Lessing was writing her memoirs and called to discuss them. Rousseau's way, she said, was the only way; you just had to tell the truth, to tell as much truth as possible" (Rushdie 2012: 373).

9. For example, when the narrator tells about his realization about what he is fighting for: "Freedom of speech, freedom of the imagination, freedom from fear, and the beautiful, ancient art of which he was privileged to be a practitioner. He would never again flinch from the defence of these things" (Rushdie 2012: 283).

10. In his memoir *Out of Place*, Said identified the two strands of his hyphenated identity in the fracture between his first name and his surname, between "'Edward', a foolishly English name forcibly yoked to the unmistakably Arabic

family name Said. […] For years, and depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past 'Edward' and emphasize 'Said'; at other times I would do the reverse, or connect these two to each other so quickly that neither would be clear" (Said 1999: 3-4).

11. One example, among many, is the detailed account of the trading barbs, mostly through the pages of *The Guardian*, between Rushdie and John Le Carré in November 1997 (Rushdie 2012: 525-529).

12. Rushdie's unpublished diaries are the main reference, quoted in brackets throughout the text; but *The Guardian*'s coverage of the events narrated in the book (including interviews and commentaries) is also extensively quoted, together with *The Daily Mail*'s and others, from some point onwards collectively referenced as *The Daily Insult* (482). The book also includes correspondence, real or fictional, between Rushdie and a plethora of public figures and friends such as the representative of the Bradford Council of Mosques Shabbir Akhtar (208), his own mother (438), Tony Blair (535), Harold Pinter (542), and a cheeky exchange between himself at 52 and at 65 on his relationship with model Padma Lakshmi (582).

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Reading Contrapuntally Now

Abstract I: This essay focuses on the relevance of Edward Said's humanism and his practice of contrapuntal reading to recent debates on world literature and the globalisation of literary studies.

Abstract II: Questo saggio propone una discussione della rilevanza dell'umanesimo di Edward Said e della sua pratica di lettura contrappuntistica per i recenti dibattiti sulla letteratura mondiale e la globalizzazione degli studi letterari.

> When three centuries ago the slaves came to the West Indies, they entered directly into the large-scale agriculture of the sugar plantation, which was a modern system. […] The Negroes, therefore, from the very start lived a life that was in its essence a modern life (James 2001: 305-306).

> The advent of aggressive subspecialities, mostly centered on the academic study of identities displaced from the worldly context into the academy – and therefore depoliticized – has had a major casualty, which is the sense of collective human history (Said 2001: 68).

It is in many ways not surprising that the late Edward Said became an admirer of the Trinidadian historian and cricket fan C. L. R. James, whose famous account of the eighteen-century slave revolution in San Domingo, *The Black Jacobins* (1938), he had got into the habit of recommending to friends and students:

> Originally published in 1938, it is a study of the great Haitian slave

insurrection that began in 1791 and was directly influenced by the ideas and actions of the French Revolution of 1789. Readers who do not know of the book react with excitement and admiration, and there is for me the special pleasure of watching people make a major discovery, as I made the same discovery some time before (Said 1989: 126).

When one reads Said's appraisal of James's epic account of the struggles waged by the black Jacobins of San Domingo, it quickly becomes apparent that the source of his admiration lies not just in James's achievements as a historian, but more broadly in James's intellectual style and demeanour. Consider, for instance, the closing paragraphs of the third chapter of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), "Resistance and Opposition", where Said singles out for praise what is arguably one of the most puzzling passages in James's book. This is the section from the 1963 appendix "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro" that juxtaposes some of the most famous lines from Aimé Césaire's poetic manifesto of the *négritude* movement, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1938), with verses from the last stanza of T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" (1941):

> but the work of man is only just beginning
> and it remains to man to conquer all
> the violence entrenched in the recesses of his passion.
>
> And no race possesses the monopoly of beauty,
> of intelligence, of force, and there
> is a place for all at the rendezvous
> of victory
> (Césaire, cited in Said 1993: 339).
>
> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual,
> Here the past and the future

> Are conquered, and reconciled,
> Where action were otherwise movement
> Of that which is only moved
> And has in it no source of movement
> (Eliot, cited in Said 1993: 339).

An exemplary instantiation of what Said would call "contrapuntal reading", James's juxtaposition, he writes, turns poetry "into a vehicle for crossing over from the provincialism of one strand of history into other histories, all of them animated by and actualized in 'an impossible union'" (Said 1993: 339-340). It is a move that according to Said captures the "energies of anti-imperialist liberation" that enervate James's work, which for him represented not so much a model as a living embodiment of the radical cosmopolitanism and practice of anti-doctrinaire intellectual militancy that he saw as constituting the most vital resources for politically engaged and creative thinking:

> This movement resists the already charted and controlled narrative lanes and skirts the systems of theory, doctrine, and orthodoxy. But, as James's whole work attests, it does not abandon the social principles of community, critical vigilance, and theoretical orientation (Said 1993: 340).

Significantly, Said's appraisal of James's oeuvre echoes the words he used to respond to those critics who disapproved of his *Orientalism* (1978) on account of its "residual humanism" and "theoretical inconsistencies". In his response, what Said claims for *Orientalism* is its value as an "individual effort", "in Gerard Manley Hopkins's sense, *original*", a "combination of consistency *and* inconsistency [...] which can only be rendered by preserving for oneself as writer and critic the right to some emotional force, the right to be moved, angered, surprised, and even delighted" (Said 1994: 339-340). Said's voice, here and elsewhere, is that of "secular intellectual" who, like James, could combine a number of apparently

conflicting engagements and affiliations: a critical thinker who maintained a strong political connection with the Arab world from which he came, at the same time as he also remained faithful to his intellectual affiliation to the European intellectual tradition in which he had been schooled. Thus, as one looks back at Said's intellectual biography in light of his allegiance to the cause of Palestinian liberation and his relentless critique of the roots of Western imperialism in European culture, one cannot fail to hear the autobiographical resonances carried by his remark that:

> There is no sense in [James's] work of [his] standing outside the Western cultural tradition, however much [he] articulated the adversarial experience of colonial and/or non-Western peoples. Well after *négritude*, Black nationalism, and the nativism of the 1960s and 1970s, James stubbornly supported the Western heritage at the same time that he belonged to the insurrectionary anti-imperialist moment which he shared with Fanon, Cabral, and Rodney (Said 1993: 248).

This same kind of double consciousness was in fact the source of one of the main charges laid by Aijaz Ahmad in his notoriously fierce *ad hominem* attack on Said in "Orientalism and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said" (Ahmad 1992: 159-220). It is a critique that bears rereading. After underscoring Said's troubled relationship with the great European tradition of comparative literary studies in which he had been trained as a scholar, and which prompted the writing of *Orientalism*, Ahmad proceeds to acknowledge that in "the field of Cultural Studies, Said is the most vivacious narrator of the history of European humanism's complicity in the history of European colonialism" (Ahmad 1992: 163). For Ahmad, however, even the latter turns out to be a dubious achievement, for it translates not only into Said's "paradoxical relationship with Western High Humanism" (Ahmad 1992: 163), but also into having gained a prominent position within a disciplinary formation that

Ahmad says is incapable of accounting for the "histories of economic exploitation, political coercion, military conquest" that have marked the relationship between the West and its colonial others (Ahmad 1992: 164). From there on, Said's ambivalences and inconsistencies become many indeed. They signally include his attempt to critique Western humanism's compromised role in colonial history by appealing to the familiar values of liberal humanism itself – "tolerance, accommodation, cultural pluralism and relativism" – and, were that not enough, to also try to reconcile humanism with a Foucauldian "Discourse Theory" whose anti-humanist theoretical underpinnings "no serious intellectual" would fail to recognise (Ahmad 1992: 164). Trying to reconcile the irreconcilable is, for Ahmad, not just a bad intellectual habit on Said's part, but a symptom of his "self-division": that same self-division that rendered him unable to let go of his aesthetic and cultural affiliation with "Western High Canonicity".

It seems to me that, at least with respect to this – other aspects of his polemic, such as the objection to Said's insertion of Marx's writings on India in the Orientalist archive, I find, to the contrary, both necessary and convincing (Ahmad 1992: 221-242) – Ahmad's animosity was misplaced. For it amounted to lambasting Said for not being what he patently was not. Said's formation was that of a classic European comparatist, very much in the tradition of Ernst Robert Curtius, Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach that he discusses in the first chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*. Indeed, this discussion, in which Said criticizes Curtius's, Spitzer's and Auerbach's Eurocentric bias while at the same praising their 'mission' and commitment to engage with the capacious richness and complexity of European languages and literatures, is entirely typical of Said's intellectual style and generosity (Said 1993: 50-55). Equally characteristic of Said's intellectual demeanour was his relationship to theory, with which he also maintained a complex and conflicted engagement. Was Said what we call a theorist? For instance, does *Culture and Imperialism* provide a theoretical framework for literary and cultural studies rooted, as Said says of Gramsci's

writings, in "the territorial, spatial, geographical foundations of social life" (Said 1993: 57)? Or, can we refer to much of his work from *Orientalism* (1978) onward as "postcolonial theory"?

What we know for sure is that Said himself never had time for this kind of thing. He never affiliated with any theoretical school or trend and was always wary of the turf battles associated with labelling theories. His points of references were Giambattista Vico fully as much as Antonio Gramsci, Erich Auerbach as well as Raymond Williams and Michel Foucault. Indeed, if one were to define contemporary theory in terms of a break with the humanist tradition, one would not know on which side of the divide Said should be placed. As Said notes about the academic reception of *Orientalism* in the Afterword to the second edition of the book (1994), which I mentioned before, "*Orientalism* is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine" (Said 1994: 339) – a point to which he returned in one of his last public lectures:

> My intellectual approach has been to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange. I have called what I try to do 'humanism', a word I continue to use stubbornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by sophisticated post-modern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake's mind-forged manacles so as to be able to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure. Moreover humanism is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods: strictly speaking therefore, there is no such thing as an isolated humanist (Said 2004: 874).

In retrospect, Said's position seems to have been vindicated. For in the

intervening years, as the increasing marginalization of theory has radically diminished the significance of the divisions that fuelled earlier theoretical debates – so much so that we have had a proliferation of books devoted to scrutinising the afterlife of theory and arguing for the need to bring it back as a mode of intellectual engagement more attuned to current cultural and political realities (see, for instance, Eagleton 2003; Elliott & Attridge 2011) – Said's humanism has become the object of an intense critical re-evaluation. As Emily Apter observes in *Against World Literature* (2013), a number of critics have recently emphasised the generative possibilities of Saidian humanism for a worldly critical praxis alert to the cultural differences and political conflicts that still traverse our globalised world – or what Apter describes as a "terrestrial" and "translational humanism [that] bequeaths a literary cartography calibrated to the social life of political cultures in real time" (Apter 2013: 212). Summed up by Apter as the combination of a practice of contrapuntal reading and the politics of secular humanism, this is a mode of critical engagement that is perhaps best displayed in the pages of *Culture and Imperialism*.

Published in the aftermath of the first Gulf War of 1991, *Culture and Imperialism* begins and ends with a passionate denunciation of American global ascendancy and the exceptionalist ideology on which its legitimisation was premised: "the last superpower, an enormously influential, frequently interventionary power nearly everywhere in the world" (Said 1993: 54), Said writes, "Today the United States is triumphalist internationally, and seems in a febrile way eager to prove that it is number one" (Said 1993: 298). Said's focus on the relation between culture and imperialism was dictated by an immediate concern that surfaces again and again in the book, and that is articulated through the construction of homologies between the "structure of feeling" of the literary and cultural texts that testify to the massive presence of imperialism in modern European culture – from Charles Dickens's, Joseph Conrad's, Jane Austen's and Rudyard Kipling's novels to Verdi's *Aida* and Camus's writings –

and the discourse of the new world order promulgated by U. S. state agencies and their intellectual allies at the end of the Cold War. Hence the theory of recursivity that shapes Said's discussion of imperialism: the appearance and reappearance, first in European and then in American culture, of the idea of "*imperium* as [a] protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule" (Said 1993: 10), whereby the civilising mission of earlier empires has been rearticulated through the exceptionalist discourse of "American specialness, altruism, and opportunity" (Said 1993: 8).

The writing of *Culture and Imperialism* was also prompted by a desire to expand the arguments about the East presented in *Orientalism* and "describe a more general pattern of relationships between the modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories" (Said 1993: xi), as well as to fill the main narrative gap in the previous book. "What I left out of *Orientalism*", Said notes, "was that response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of decolonization across the Third World" (Said 1993: xii). So, in addition to generalising his earlier Foucauldian insights on how the othering and fixing of non-European identities constituted the epistemic foundation of the colonial enterprise, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said also gives an account of how the 'consolidated vision' of the colonised world produced by imperial culture has been radically subverted by the oppositional political and cultural movements that emerged from the colonial and postcolonial world. Crucially for Said, the legacy of the intellectual currents and figures produced by these movements is marked not so much, or in any case not exclusively by an assertion of radical alterity, but most significantly by what he calls "the voyage in" (Said 1993: 216): that is, by the acts of appropriation performed by writers and intellectuals from the formerly colonised world – Said singles out C. L. R. James and George Antonius as the precursors of this type of cultural work – who "have imposed their diverse histories on, have mapped their local geographies in, the great canonical texts of the European center" (Said 1993: 53), and whose work has

resulted in the production of new hybrid and cosmopolitan cultural formations and identities. Said's polemical target in underscoring the creolised and transnational character of the products of these acts of cultural resistance and opposition are "the old categories, the tight separations, and the comfortable autonomies" (Said 1993: 53) through which cultural boundaries are controlled by "the *police* action of simple dogma and loud patriotism" (Said 1993: 15). In a programmatic passage placed at the end of the first chapter, Said writes that to oppose this dogma and undo the damage it has caused, "we must speak of overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non-whites, dwellers in the metropolis and on the peripheries, past as well as present and future" (Said 1993: 61).

I have written elsewhere (Frassinelli forthcoming) about the need to update Said's formulations in light of the geopolitical realignments that have marked the last twenty years: beginning with the decline of American power (Wallerstein) and the socioeconomic dislocations within the neoliberal world order captured by the provocative subtitle of Jean and John Comaroff's recent book *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (2012). Here I would like to briefly discuss how we can today read Said's own elaboration contrapuntally, as an intervention into the ongoing debates about literature and globalisation, which is also the subject of a short article, "Globalizing Literary Studies" (2001), that Said published in a special issue of *PMLA* with the same title.

As Paul Jay recapitulates in one of the essays included in the volume, "Culture is now being defined in terms less of national interests than of a shared set of global ones. This shift in the cultural role of the nation-state has profound implications for its institutions, particularly its schools, colleges, and universities" (Jay 2001: 32). Speaking about the discipline of English Studies, Jay argues that in order to survive the challenge of globalisation and its progressive overwhelming of local and national subjectivities, identities and cultural

formations, literature curricula ought to be reconfigured in ways that move beyond the national(ist) paradigms with which, especially in canonical areas of the discipline, they have been traditionally identified. Nor, Jay adds, is this just a matter of enlarging the canon to include regional literatures or literatures produced in diasporic conditions – though this is *per se* a preferable option to approaching the latter as culturally discrete, autonomous formations to be positioned in sub-disciplinary locations defined vis-à-vis the traditional areas of the canon. The curricular changes called for by the increasingly globalised context of our disciplinary endeavours should also – or indeed primarily – involve a revision of traditional models of literary history: grounded in the understanding that globalisation is a long historical process that has been evolving since at least the early modern period, this revision should give "primary attention to the historical role literature has had in global systems of cultural exchange and recognize that this exchange has always been multidirectional" (Jay 2001: 42). This, however, does not mean doing away with national literatures once and for all, nor, for that matter, downplaying the powerful cultural identities and attachments that the nation-state still represents in most parts of the world. Rather, the call here is for a properly historicist approach that emphasises how national paradigms are historically, politically and culturally constructed, functional rather than normative.

Such proposals are, of course, not new: one is reminded, in particular, of Edward Said's suggestion, in *Culture and Imperialism*, that we reread the Western cultural archive "not univocally but *contrapuntally*", so as to articulate on the one hand the interconnectedness between metropolitan history and "those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominant discourse acts" (Said 1993: 51), and on the other how writers and intellectuals from the formerly colonised world have adapted many of the texts of the Western canon to suit their cultural and political needs (Said 1993: 53). But they undoubtedly take on new urgency under the rubric of globalisation, which

demands that we rethink how we relate to the cultural past in an attempt to cross the discrete national boundaries that have traditionally delimited the "territories of knowledge" (Gunn 2001: 18) within the humanities. Jay's emphases on the long history of globalisation and the multidirectional cultural processes that it has engendered are therefore all the more apposite and worth retaining. They remind us that the project of globalising literary studies runs the risk in the first place of replacing "the old authoritative, Eurocentric models" with research and pedagogical agendas that no less problematically reflect the "new ascendancy of a globalized, postmodern consciousness from which [...] the gravity of history has been excised" (Said 2001: 66); and, second, of reproducing a one-dimensional, hierarchical and diffusionist "centre-periphery" model – autonomous development at the centre, diffusion of development to the periphery (Blaut 1993) – of globalisation as Westernisation, whereby the periphery is reduced to a site of passive reception and consumption of imported, globally hegemonic cultural forms. My claim, then, is that it is in addressing these issues that Edward Said's work remains particularly valuable to contemporary literary and cultural studies: both as a model of literary and cultural history and as a flexible and rich set of concepts and suggestions that we can revisit to grapple with pressing interpretative, curricular and disciplinary concerns.

In *Culture and Imperialism* Said offers a definition of culture grounded in the theoretical and methodological assumption "that cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality" (Said 1993: 14). As he reiterates in the final paragraph of the book:

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. [...]

> It is more rewarding – and more difficult – to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about 'us' (Said 1993: 336).

The crucial point that Said makes throughout the text is that the attachment to a notion of cultural purity not only circumscribes the space for cultural exchange, but also reproduces hierarchies and divisions which represent one of the legacies of imperialism that we still haven't managed to overcome: "The tragedy [...] of so many postcolonial experiences, derives from the limitations of the attempts to deal with relationships that are polarized, racially uneven, remembered differently" (Said 1993: 18). It is against this background that Said introduces the notion of contrapuntal reading: as a way of rediscovering the entanglements and interconnectedness of the histories that link inextricably together peoples and areas of the globe that are still too often construed as each other's other.

Said's practice of contrapuntal reading goes beyond comparatism. It does not simply show that our reading experience is enhanced by comparing literary and cultural works that belong to different traditions, historical periods or geographical locations. More radically, it illuminates their common ground, the borrowings and exchanges that constitute all literary and cultural formations. It thus helps us to see and theorise their interactions without re-inscribing them into rigidly hierarchical and binary paradigms, which – it is worth underscoring – is not the same as ignoring or downplaying the fact that cultural integration has often taken place, and still takes place, under regimes of inequality, domination and epistemic violence. A contrapuntal perspective, by foregrounding the multidirectional interactions between the subaltern and the dominant, the metropolitan and the peripheral, reconfigures the divisions on which these categories are premised by pointing, in Said's own words, to their "overlapping territories, intertwined histories".

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Global South 'in Theory' and Southern Epistemology

Abstract I: This essay offers a reflection on the 'global South' category, starting from *Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Said to finish with the last work by Jean and John Comaroff *Theory from the South*, thus joining the contemporary theoretical debate on the future of the 'southern world'. Since the time of Said, the planet has seen radical changes and the East-West axis of the Cold War has been replaced by the postcolonial North-South axis, with the added complication of the rise of China as a global economic power in the East. This essay tries to untangle such complications through the positions of, among others, Achille Mbembe, reflecting on the fate of Africa as linked to that of China, and of Franco Cassano, with his hope in a southern epistemology, not yet devoured by capitalist fundamentalism.

Abstract II: Il saggio offre una riflessione sulla categoria di 'Sud globale', partendo da *Cultura e imperialismo* di Edward Said per finire all'ultimo lavoro di Jean and John Comaroff *Theory from the South*, inserendosi quindi nel dibattito teorico contemporaneo sul futuro del 'mondo meridionale'. Dai tempi di Said, il pianeta ha visto cambiamenti radicali e all'asse della guerra fredda Est-Ovest si è sostituito quello postcoloniale Nord-Sud, con la complicazione dell'emergenza della Cina come potenza capitalista mondiale in quanto Est. Complicanze che il saggio cerca di districare attraverso le posizioni, fra gli altri, di Achille Mbembe che riflette sul destino africano legato all'ascesa cinese e di Franco Cassano con la sua speranza in una epistemologia del Sud, non ancora divorata dal fondamentalismo capitalista.

A Little Story: Intro

I recently decided to have my old Vespa *50 special* fixed and went to a garage. Once there, I saw some brand new shining Vespas and the mechanic suggested I should buy a new Vespa rather than having mine repaired. It was cheaper he concluded. I said "I didn't know Piaggio produces new models". He replied "No, Piaggio don't, but LML do". "LML?", I asked. "Yes, the Indian company" he answered. I don't know why, but this occurrence took my mind directly to the Italian marines held in India, accused of killing two Indian fishermen by mistake off the Kerala coast, and to the fact that they were still detained there. I connected the brand new Indian Italian-style vespas, the brand new Indian foreign policy, and the Italian state which in the past had failed to prosecute American soldiers, who had accidently killed Italian citizens on Italian soil. "Yes, the world is changing" was my conclusion. It is changing and 'evolving' toward the South, to unfaithfully use Jean and John Comaroff's provocative term from their book *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (2012), of which I will talk later.

Edward Said and Imperialism at the Turn of History: West/East to North/South

At the time when *Culture and Imperialism* was written (at the beginning of the 1990s, a few years after the fall of the Berlin wall), in search of an alternative both to "the politics of blame and of hostility", Said accurately wrote: "the old divisions between colonizer and colonized have re-emerged in what is often referred to as the North-South relationship" (Said 1994: 18). To rephrase Said's sentence, he sensed that with the end of the Cold War the world divide was no longer West/East; that is to say, the world split between Euro-American capitalism and Sino-Soviet communism – vying with each other for the so-called Third World. Rather, the divide was North/South, that is to say, a division between northern capitalist countries and southern pre-capitalist countries.

Unlike many statesmen of that time, eager to construct the new 'proper'

world order after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he also sensed that this new partition was potentially dangerous, since it might have trigged devastating cultural and material wars. Indeed, terrible wars *between* and *within* national states were taking or had taken place over and around the same decade (the Gulf Wars of the Bushes and Yugoslavia's violent dismembering, to name but the main ones). He was also right about the inequities of power and wealth in the global setting, which were interpretable as having something to do with new forms of imperialism. He pointed out that the South, or "the nations of contemporary Asia, Latin America, and Africa are politically independent but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers" (Said 1994: 20). Twenty years have passed since then and the complex global dynamics have reframed our ideas of hegemonic centres and subaltern peripheries. What was clear and right, though, was that what we now call 'global South' roughly corresponded and still corresponds to former colonized countries. The Comaroffs agree with Said when they claim that: "The closest thing to a common denominator among them [the southern countries] is that many were once colonies [...] 'Postcolonial', therefore, is something of a synonym, but only an inexact one". One inexactness is that countries like Thailand and Ethiopia were never formally colonized. So they conclude that the 'global South' is

> less a geographical place than a polythetic category [since] the label itself is inherently slippery, inchoate, unfixed [...] "*the* Global South" assumes meaning by virtue not of its content, but of its context, of the way in which it points to other things. Of these, the most significant, obviously, is its antinomy with "*the* Global North" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 45).

So the South is neither solely a historical nor solely a geographical place. Further to history and geography, one should also consider economy or wealth. If it is

true that the line between North and South is unstable and porous (there is much South in the North, much North in the South), it is above all true that we can refer to the South as a place where the majority of people live in a condition of scarcity, so far.

But since we want to give a more general meaning to the vast category of the global South, then the Comaroffs' definition of the South as a 'way' in which it points to other things may be largely acceptable. I like to think of the global South as a vast imagined community (Anderson 1983) made up of a multiplicity of communities, similarly imagined, and which similarly point to *other things*. The very problem is which other things one must point to.

North/South Now. Upside Down World?

If Said could foresee devastating new wars and the nature of the new world axis, he couldn't predict present global trends, which, according to the Comaroffs' mock-counter-evolutionist subtitle, Euro-America, or the global North, is 'evolving' toward Africa. And, perhaps, the global South is, to use again their semi-ironic stance, 'regressing' toward Euro-America. Said wrote *Culture and Imperialism* before the ascent of the so-called BRICSA. What will happen now that Brazil, India and China are, according to the historicist paradigm, 'developing'? And now that America is supposedly becoming, as Arianna Huffington would put it, Third World (Huffington 2010)? Indeed, many questions are raised and, in truth, few answers can be given. But let us tackle the issue closely.

According to the Comaroffs, firstly, modernity is a North-South collaboration, albeit asymmetrical; secondly, this collaboration is now inverting its unevenness. In their words:

> Contrary to the received Euromodernist narrative of the past two
> centuries – which has the global south tracking behind the curve of
> Universal History, always in deficit, always playing catch-up – there is

good reason to think the opposite: that given the unpredictable, under-determined dialectics of capitalism-and-modernity in the here and now, it is the south that often is the first to feel the effects of world-historical forces, the south in which radically new assemblages of capital and labor are taking shape, thus to prefigure the future of the global north (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 12).

And although they claim they are not simply reversing the notorious Hegelian teleology, they add: "Put another way […] Africa, South Asia and Latin America seem, in many respects, to be running slightly ahead of the Euromodern world, harbingers of its history-in-the-making" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 13). To put it yet in another way, neoliberal capital, with its stress on flexibility and deregulation, is once more finding room in former colonies (which are eager to get easy incomes) to practice in a postcolonial context new extreme *laissez-faire* economy. The difference now is that these political-economic experiments are first made in the South, then exported to the North. That is why Euro-America would be semi-mockingly, but not teleologically evolving toward Africa (1). Some examples of political-economic experiments are: the emergence of Brazil as the world's first biofuel economy; the impact of the Hong Kong banking sector on the development of new species of financial market; new forms of urbanism, as in Nigeria, with its megalopolis Lagos (18 million people).

   But if the present global South prefigures the future of the global North, is this future utopian or dystopian? The Comaroffs are not interested in this question. It is a question, though, that interests Srinivas Aravamudan, who in the on-line forum on Comaroffs' book writes:

Such a thesis is unable or unwilling to make up its mind about something crucial, which is whether the realization of Africa as the endpoint of late capitalism is truly an advancement in the sense of the nineteenth-century idea of progress, or a trajectory that is an augury of the dystopian

outcome of capitalism: in other words this is Marxist tragedy disguised as Hegelian farce (Aravamudan 2012).

If so, it is as if there is no alternative to the capitalism-and-modernity dialectics: urban blast, hyper-populist or autocratic democracy, epidemics of HIV-AIDS, social policies subsiding under the enormous pressure of the rapacious neoliberalism, all of them represent a dystopian, degenerate future, rather than a utopian one. And, truly, this *is* a problem, regardless of whether the vanguard-place of its implementation is Africa or another continent.

North and South. And the Confucian Capitalism of the New East?

To put it blatantly, the main problem with the world interpreted through the North/South axis is that it leaves out a key cardinal direction: the East, where China is. According to the Comaroffs, China is both North and South, and greatly profits from this position, playing in the interstices between worlds. In truth, the issue is that China is neither North nor South but plainly East. Above all, it epitomizes a peculiar form of capitalism able to turn both North and South into its periphery. Before India bought the English Land Rover, China bought the American IBM. China owns an important portion of American government debt, it is nearly doubling U.S. exports in 2013, and is the world's largest consumer of Africa's raw materials. If something is evolving toward somewhere, this is the world evolving toward China, if not toward its bizarre form of state or party capitalism, at least toward its most brutal exploitation of labor, fostered by both domestic and global capital. According to Achille Mbembe, it is especially Africa which is evolving toward China and if China wants to build a stronger domestic economy it has to rely precisely on Africa: "A theory from the South will therefore attend not only to 'How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa', but also to the conditions under which Africa (the South) and China (the East) are trying to weave the paths that tie both regions in the present and in the future"

(Mbembe 2012).

Indeed, in their rejoinder to the criticism raised by their book, the Comaroffs deny the world is evolving toward China but admit it might indeed become the workshop of the world. They write: "It certainly *is* a critical node in the new global imaginary, one that writes modern history again as an evolutionary narrative, this time with East Asia as its endpoint" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012b). Thus, they admit the importance of that cardinal point on the compass of theory. If so, then, we should say something about it. But a step back, first. We usually connect the East to religious fundamentalism and forget about western fundamentalisms. One of these is, so to speak, Protestant capitalism. Now the latter is being overcome by another, the so-called "Confucian capitalism" (2). Apparently, while we talk about South and North, the contest is between these two ways of controlling the world, both belonging, if not to the same cultural realm, to the same economic one, and both vying with each other for the conquest of the planet, a conquest seemingly passing through the conquest of Africa and its raw materials.

Southern Epistemology as a Way Out of the Capitalist Dead End?

The question is: is the global South, or for that matter the postcolonial world, aware of this danger? Or is it only light-heartedly welcoming the latest stage of the capitalism-and-modernity dialectics? Is a different southern epistemology possible through which to challenge such dialectics? According to some leading thinkers of/from the South the answer is yes. To Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "the conflicts between hegemonic, neoliberal globalization and counter-hegemonic globalization are more intense in [southern] countries" (de Sousa Santos 2005: 157). Mbembe, in turn, believes that Chinese symbiosis with Africa forces the latter to reflect on an alternative way to increase the wealth of a nation, a way not yet forgotten, prior to the arrival of capitalism, which did not wholly erase African historical matrixes:

One such matrix is the existence of a long tradition of market economy and long-distance trading diasporas which mobilized human rather than non-human resources and protected rather than destroyed the economic independence and welfare of agricultural producers. Under what conditions could these historical matrixes re-emerge or be reshaped as resources as Africa tries to formulate a place for herself in a world where the power of the West has begun to decline is certainly a question the rise of China and India poses to the future of theory from Africa (Mbembe 2012).

Franco Cassano takes the existence of the southern counter-thought for granted. To him: "The South poses the problem of justice, not the quest for power; a concept of life that does not seek to dominate nature and other cultures, but to live in harmony with both" (Cassano 2012: LIV).

The problem is that the quest for justice is more thought than practiced, above all by southern governments, as the global South is showing, yielding to both Protestant and Confucian or, considered that the latter term is controversial, Asian capital (3). Is there a way out? A way out, maybe, related to the plurality of the postcolonial world, a South that stretches from America to India and passes through the hybridity of the Mediterranean and the immensity of the African continent? A polythetic South, the Comaroffs call it. Can this plurality, these multiple trajectories be a possible exodus from the monotheism of capitalism, be it western or eastern? Cassano hopes so. The problem, for him, is the prevention of the fundamentalism of one of the cardinal points. This is his 'contrapuntal' solution, which remind us of the final words of Said's book "No one today is purely *one* thing" (Said 1994: 407):

We must be the center in the only way this is possible today: as a crossroads, as the ability to play each cardinal point against the fundamentalism of the others … If we are North, we must point South; if

we are South, we must point North; if we are West, we must point East; and if East, West. Today only two of these directions are followed, and it is herein that the lack of moderation lies (Cassano 2012: 123-124).

Finally, if the South does not want to fall into the fundamentalist trap, it should make its voice of 'zero power rule' heard before it is too late, that is to say, before Monsieur le Capital after having devoured the North gobbles up the South, and the old game of master and slave goes on as usual, even though in a new or reversed guise. Ultimately, we are talking of the weakness-strength that would allow the South to dare *parresia*, that is to say, to tell the power the truth, from whichever cardinal direction it comes.

NOTES

1. The Comaroffs stress, in an on line forum on their book, that "'counter' here, is intended to mean not just *inversion* but also *negation*. We deploy it to point to irony, not to teleology". They take the example of urban scapes, which "as global phenomena, have strongly convergent tendencies […] because of the way that capital, and its cultural mediations, tend to play themselves out under specific demographic, infrastructural, and sociological conditions; conditions that, again, are most graphically visible in places like Lagos. Not everywhere, nor all in the same way – hence, again, our anti-teleological insistence – but in ways that materialize the hydra-headed configurations of contemporary capitalism as it takes its historical course. These configurations, we stress, are ill-captured by terms like 'deterioration' or 'advancement' or any of the other dualisms that we seek so carefully to avoid in *Theory from the South*" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012b).
2. The expression "Confucian capital" takes for granted that Asian capitalism is informed by new-Confucianism as much as Euro-American capitalism is informed by Protantism. Not so for Lionel Jensen (1998), who claims that

Confucianism is a Western invention, traceable to the Jesuits in late imperial China (a sort of orientalisation and essentialisation of some particular qualities of historical Confucianism such as propriety, social discipline, loyalty), an invention that assumes Confucian values as the motor behind China's economic success. It is to be noted that, in the past decades, those values used to be considered not a stimulus but an obstacle to Chinese modernisation by Western sinologists.

3. The debate around the rise of capitalism in the East is as old as the rise of the so-called 'tiger economies' (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea), and Confucian ethics has often, if controversially, been involved as an explanation following Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (see Macfarquhar 1980; Berger 1988; Kahn 1979).

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A Meditation on Said's *Beginnings*: Reconsidering Text and Career as Sites of Power and Resistance

Abstract I: In this essay I use Said's claim for a return to philology in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* as a point of departure for reconsidering some aspects of his early book *Beginnings.* I linger upon the epistemological and ontological values of text and career considered as sites of power and resistance to highlight how writers' texts and careers become 'sites' when Said engages the 'Gramsci factor' on the Foucauldian matrix. Said's contrapuntal 'inventory' of the traces of the historical process is a human as well as an intellectual need: he entangles his philological assumptions of Vico, Auerbach and Gramsci with his traditional humanistic education and his exilic biography. The final result is a personal dimension which redefines the concept of career as such and which radically characterizes Said's praxis as a secular intellectual attitude, a philological method of inquiry and a genuine vocation to criticism.

Abstract II: Partendo dal recupero della filologia che Said propugna in *Umanesimo e critica democratica,* in questo saggio mi soffermo su alcuni aspetti di *Beginnings,* uno dei suoi primi lavori, per riconsiderare il valore epistemologico e ontologico dei concetti di testo e carriera come siti di potere e resistenza. Quello che mi preme sottolineare è la particolare modalità di questo passaggio prospettico compiuto da Said: l'analisi del testo e della carriera degli scrittori diventa 'sito' quando s'innesta quello che lui chiama 'fattore Gramsci' sulla matrice foucaultiana. Said propone un 'inventario' contrappuntistico delle tracce che il processo storico lascia in ognuno di noi come espressione di un'esigenza tanto intellettuale quanto umana che

intreccia le lezioni di Vico, Auerbach e Gramsci con la sua forte formazione umanistica e l'esperienza biografica di palestinese esiliato. Said propone una dimensione personale che ridefinisce il concetto di carriera e caratterizza radicalmente la pratica intellettuale come un'attività secolare, un metodo filologico-sintetico d'indagine e una genuina vocazione alla critica.

Introduction

The beginning is the fundamental moment of the creative process when the perspective, the style and the aim of an author concur to give life to an authentic contribution. *Beginnings: Intentions and Method* was Edward W. Said's first remarkable publication and at the same time quite a different text from the ones which later set the Palestinian critic's fame. It was one of those 'eccentric' volumes dotting in an exceptional but fundamentally meaningful way the history of literary criticism. It was also Said's seminal starting point for a radical revolution of the conception of 'criticism', considered as the constitutive activity of intellectuals in contemporary society, and 'humanism', assumed as the core of Western cultural existence. Appeared in a moment when post-structuralism was starting to transversally cut across the Western cultural debate, this book proposed a really peculiar confrontation with the initial charge of French authors such as Barthes, Derrida and Foucault, presenting a radically different reception from the coeval American one. Said, indeed, used a certain post-structuralist fundamental vocabulary as a privileged instrument of critical connotation along his analysis picking up rather outstanding concepts, to the extent that the book could seem almost unbalanced between the old, deeply rooted, psycho-historical approach and the new, still unexplored, post-structuralist perspective.

The main theme of the book underwent the most impressive transformation: it became a topic that "is more a structure than a history, but

this structure cannot be immediately seen, named or grasped" (Said 1975: 16), whose subject has a certain discriminant of authority, even if provisory and foucauldianally 'nomadic' (Said 1975: 23). Yet for Said it was "rather a question of letting the structure multiply into more branches, into projects" that "it makes especially interesting (and in some cases even makes possible): fiction, the making of texts, and the criticism, analysis, and characterization of knowledge and language" (Said 1975: 17). *Beginnings* inaugurated his political path with a pressing urgency for a reform of criticism and humanism, both in a general and a specific sense. Said had not yet 'discovered' Antonio Gramsci's works, and, though heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, the pivotal reference author in *Beginnings* is surprisingly the great Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico. An influence that has been often thought of as secondary to the Foucaultian one. Indeed, scholars such as Brennan, Mufti, Lindenberger, Hussein, Veeser and Pala, have highlighted the massive influence of Vico, via Erich Auerbach (Lindenberger 2004: 46) and via György Lukács (Brennan 2004: 118), on Said's methodology. Even if the chapter "Abecedarium Culturae" in *Beginnings* (Said 1975: 277-344) was one of the very first introductions of Foucault to the American public, and though undoubtedly the Palestinian critic was intrigued by the critical potential of the notion of discourse as regards the inextricable relationship between power and knowledge, nevertheless Foucault played only a secondary role in the book. His influence would become definitely more important in *Orientalism* (Spanos 2007: 71), but Said eventually rejected him, attacking the closure of the political depiction and the denial of the emancipatory potential in his model (Said 1983: 158-177). Here, I will consider some particular aspects of Vico's and Auerbach's presence in *Beginnings*, *Culture and Imperialism* and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* to highlight the strong link between the philological approach to literary criticism and the human condition of the author.

Vico, Auerbach and Said: Intention, Philology and Method

Beginnings is shaped, above all, by a complex constitutive framework built upon an innovative – and again eccentric – reading of modernist literature through Giambattista Vico's *La scienza nuova*. First of all, there is the fundamental distinction between 'sacred history' and 'secular history', 'divine world' and 'gentle world'. In Vico's science, the divine world is the expression of who chooses to live according to a transcendental absolute outside time and space (that is out of history): religion prohibits 'divination', as a science to fathom one's own origin, to avoid a return to primordial barbarity. The gentle world is made by the *gens*, "the family group whose exfoliation in time generates history" (Said 1975: 130), through the agency of the *ingegno*, the human form of knowledge as ingenuity and spirit for which Vico's new science had claimed against the divine *fons et origo.* This first distinction is mirrored in the fundamental concepts of 'origin' and 'beginning'. The beginning is "the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (Said 1975: 5) which constitutes the radical problem of agency, that is its "intention and method", as the discriminant for the factual role of the human subject in the making of secular history. Vico had pursued the etymological nexus *ingenium-inventio* in order to state that the *ingegno* is the human faculty responsible for the informing of that "web of filiations and affiliations that composes human history: law, politics, literature, power, science, emotion" (Said 1975: 5) because the creed which characterizes the human mind is "its intention to be" (1), that is its will to perpetuate the race and to shape the world of nations:

> The collective human fate is far from a simple choice over extinction. It entails the historical creation (also constantly experienced) of an order of meaning different from the order of God's sacred history. Man's beginning is a transgression; and so long as man exists, the fact of his existence asserts the beginning-as-transgression (Said 1975: 353).

Ingegno, considered a faculty of historical creation, implies an unlimited possibility to produce solutions: it just needs to be normalized along the factual course of history in order to save the social order of human communities. Yet perception and creation require both a strong initial act of will to unhinge the anti-historical Cartesian presumptions (2): such a beginning intention is the historical creation of the self, inasmuch as "in the very act of understanding the world, man is in reality understanding himself" (Said 1975: 364). Human knowledge must not be limited to the mere spheres of universal logic and rational truth; moreover, the perspective of genealogical philology has to involve the whole historical complex to serve as a universal modality to understand human reality. Vico had built the oppositional pair philosophy/philology as homologues to the ones true/certain and science/consciousness. If the 'true' is ungraspable to man because it is the expression of a divine wisdom, the 'certain' will always be the practical knowledge upon which lies the progress of civilization, and because the 'certain' is the expression of *invention* it is a historical product that can be grasped through a philology reduced to the form of a science, i.e. as philosophy (Vico 2006: 390).

After an ulterior etymological specification, Vico bound the *ingegno* with memorial and imaginative faculties as a *memento* of the past and as a 'phantasy' towards the future for the comprehension of the *novum*. What really mattered about this novelty, as fantastic or mathematical as it was, was "some valid purpose for the mind that created it and held it […] the beginning point which is neither entirely mind (or abstraction) nor matter (or concreteness)" (Said 1975: 360) or the 'conation'. This conation is exactly the beginning intention taken by Said as the theoretical *Leitmotiv* of the book: it indicates the capability to initiate something, to produce meanings, "to make the history of gentile nations" starting from the 'certain' upon which human knowledge is based according to a metaphysical individuation of the agency as the meeting

point between the temporal and the universal. The 'conation' is the beginning as identity of mind and history: it is the history viewed as the study of the eternal persistence of the human mind's idea, in other words it is the temporal narrative of man's existence (Said 1975: 361).

The relationship between subject and world must be intended as relation between will and beginning, so that Vico's theory of *corsi e ricorsi* had configured itself as an index of the invariant regularities of the chaotic human act. Only such an order of repetition opposed to a constant originality could – according to the well-known threefold scheme of God's, Heroes' and Men's epochs – normalize the validity of the infinite possible choices made according to the 'certain'. This normalization is carried on by the reduction of the grand divine soul in the body of the single human being: the succession of generations implies man's will of continuity and genealogy. Man must willingly reduce himself from a divine to a secular being, giving up his unlimited possibility of acting in the world, amassing "dead bodies" (Said 1975: 371-373) in intelligible sequences, and assimilating his history in a fantastic language able to mimic such complexity. It is a linguistic rationalization, because along the eras language will lose its poetic quality to become a regular expression of man's secular nature: a man no more able to glean that poetic wisdom which let him understands his past history, so that the cycle will begin again forever and ever. Here the philologist comes into the picture that has to rebuild adjacencies, dispersions and complementarities in order to reinstate a theory of historical coherence that:

> showed how each period shared in its language, art, metaphysics, logic, science, law, and religion features [...] Thus human history and society are created, a laborious process of unfolding, development, contradiction, and, most interestingly, representation (Said 2004: 91).

Philology returns poetic wisdom, the universal modality of connection between every field of human knowledge that allows scholars to find a sense in the linguistic chaos, a picture of trace fossils whose interpretation recovers a "vocabolario mentale delle cose umane socievoli" (Vico 2006: 126) (3).

According to Said, it is then necessary "to live the author's reality and to undergo the kind of life experiences intrinsic to the author's life, all by that combination of erudition and sympathy that is the hallmark of philological hermeneutics" (Said 2004: 92) in order to fully understand a text. From this assumption it is possible to pinpoint the 'beginning intention' of Said's literary criticism as a transversal conceptualization, similar to Vico's 'conation' as well as to Auerbach's *Ansatz* (Auerbach 1967: 11): a philological approach to literary texts aiming to return to the representation of that pristine transgression which started humanistic history. This 'transgression' is the articulation of three main issues: "human identity, human history and human language" (Said 1975: 90), which mirror the initial components of the novel as a literary genre binding it to the narrative representation of the gentle world. As fiction, the novel approaches 'true reality', following the personal choices of the author, that is a skim of his perception of reality: Said considers "the institution of narrative prose fiction as a kind of appetite that writers develop for modifying" (Said 1975: 82). However, because of this personal perception, it is necessary to underline again the tragic imperfection of knowledge, because it is imperative to understand what kind of role 'poetic wisdom' has to play in the constitution of what Auerbach called Vico's "philosophical philology or philological philosophy" (Auerbach 1958: 16). It is the humanistic science of world comprehension: it fights against a mere accumulation of facts and notions in order to rediscover the creativity of man's historical being, the manifestation of reality and the unfolding of truth 'in human history'. Vico rediscovered the power of poetic language and of fantastic universal in the primal thought and in the corporeal sensibility of suffering man. The same constitutive grade of fallibility, which

undermines human knowledge, is the constitution of man as a "measure of all things": "L'uomo, per l'indiffinita natura della mente umana, ove questa si rovesci nell'ignoranza, egli fa sé regola dell'universo" (Vico 2006: 355) (4).

Therefore, Vico's (and Said's) humanism is not an absolute and essentialist system, it actually makes a claim for a democratic process of critical investigation and of questioning knowledge instead. Vico is, indeed, "that prototypical modern thinker who perceives beginning as an activity requiring the writer to maintain an un-straying obligation to practical reality and sympathetic imagination in equally strong parts" (Said 1975: 349). This 'obligation' is exactly the ethical measure of responsibility that an effective humanism's renewal requires:

> By *obligation* I mean here the precision with which the concrete circumstances of any undertaking oblige the mind to take them into account […] by learning, first, that there is no schematic method that makes all things simple, the second, whatever with reference to one's circumstances is necessary in order to begin, given one's field of study. And by referring to *sympathetic imagination* I mean that to begin to write is to "know" what at the outset cannot be known except by inventing it, exactly, intentionally, auto-didactically. It is the interrelation between this obligation and the sympathetic imagination, however that is crucial (Said 1975: 349).

The quality of such an interrelation measures the success of the inquiring method and the effective potential of intellectual renewing. Said's acquisition of Auerbach, Gramsci and, partially, Foucault, will bear ulterior terms for the clarification of this "synthetic philological method" and will define the modalities of its application to the interpretation of historical narratives and cultural productions for the delineation of a criticism able to face the challenges of post-modernity.

The Techno-ethical Conditions of Writing and the Authorial Will in History

The issues at stake in *Beginnings* involve two topical paths. The first, as previously mentioned, regards Said's assimilation of Vico's philological historicism within his methodology of critique. The second issue is the concept of 'authority': Said underlined, through Freud and Auerbach, how in Modernism, due to the socio-economical upheavals of the early 20th century, the form and the representation of narrative realization are contingent upon the wish – legitimated, but at the same time 'abused' by the authorial consciousness – of the author's self-edification in his historical time, a mimetic will of the vital processes of birth, growth and death. When Auerbach focused on the conception of reality in modernity, he found a radical change in the modalities of its representation. The ancient claim to fully show the complex development of reality along literary narration had shattered itself against the psychological upheaval of modernity, and such a clash then shifted the narrative attention towards a most extreme and rarefied subjectivity.

After Vico, and through Auerbach and Freud, such an evaluation on the importance and the essence of Modernism, considered as a humanly historical and psychological literary event, posits the issue of *beginnings* according to a double perspective of "authority and molestation" (Said 1975: 84-85). The first term regards writing as a creative act of projection of will onto reality, which is Vico's "beginning intention", that allows the unpredictable realization of man's history in opposition to the immutable divine origin. The second one is more problematic from an hermeneutic point of view, because it means 'abuse' or 'molestation' in the sense that, when the writer's consciousness confronts itself with the responsibilities and duties of its authorial power, it forces the writer, both as subject and perpetrator of the 'abuse', to realize the narrative limits of the novel as genre and its illusory representation of reality, and it instills a fundamental doubt about the actual possibility of historical realization that 'authority' allows as 'beginning'.

Throughout the book, Said analyzes some great modernist texts (Conrad, Lawrence, Freud, etc.) through this double perspective searching for those "inner struggles" which made those texts possible (5). These struggles are the intimate and psychological explications of the dramatic intercourses between authority and molestation because they are the proper "roots of the fictional process" (Said 1975: 84). These struggles inevitably characterize and influence the text, they become its propulsive source concretizing in the writer's self the intention to write exactly 'that text', thus those 'texts' are paradigmatic instances of Modernism's revolutionary changes in thought and literature along the first decades of the 20th century. The ways in which these texts are written epitomize the transformations of novel as representation of reality, the radical shift in the intercourse between writing and will, and the upheaval in the subjective perception of human history. According to Said, such a transformation derives essentially from those maniacal obsessions of some capital authors for their techniques of writing and realization, obsessions obviously rooted in those dramatic 'inner struggles':

> Therefore, the text is a multidimensional structure extending from the beginning to the end of the writer's career. A text is the source and the aim of a man's desire to be an author, it is the form of his attempts, it contains the elements of his coherence, and in a whole range of complex and differing ways it incarnates the pressures upon the writer of his psychology, his time, his society. The unity between career and text, then, is a unity between an intelligible pattern of events and for the most part their increasingly conscious transformation into writing (Said 1975: 196).

In a previous footnote Said writes that "one rarely finds, however, an English-language critic asking where a text takes place, or how it takes place" (Said 1975: 195). This footnote appears in a paragraph which suggests considering

"the text as a structure in the compositional process started from strong initial creative intention" in order to scrape off the ancient prejudices against the conception of text as a solid and validated object. Said underlines the author as a potential creator and the text as a product of will because he wants to show more interesting and deeper interpretative possibilities. To fully comprehend this remark, that "radical attitude toward language" (Said 1975: 72) suggested as a 'label' of a different intellectual and literary tradition must be considered. A more genius and effective tradition because it had been able to grasp that "the life of language was the first fact of the writing life" (6) returning constantly to "the connection between the characteristics of language as a form of human knowledge, perception, and behavior, and those fundamental facts of human reality, namely will, power, and desire" (Said 1975: 72). When Said asks in the footnote "where and how a text takes place", he wants to underline the will to political power transpiring from the 'career' considered as the ontological project (Said 1975: 231-232) of an author through his public and private works. Such a conceptualization of these socio-psychological authorial tensions could be viewed, through the geo-historical perspective of Antonio Gramsci and Erich Auerbach, *mutatis mutandis* as a profound homology between the authorial will of the writer, considered as the legitimation of his representation of the world, and the intellectual's will to hegemony, considered as the legitimation of his *Weltanschauung*.

Modernity has modified the relationship between text and writing: the text, far from being a simple object to be created, became the *simulacrum* of the writer's perpetual struggle to live up to his career, because writing itself became an effort in self-realization following an ontological and not simply existential becoming (Said 1975: 194-195). At the same time, the intellectual could no longer consider theory as an interpretation of reality sustaining praxis for the change of society, because it became the interest of his self-edification within hegemony. The synthesis between theory and praxis would have

occurred then as the assimilation of one's own *Weltanschauung* within the dominant hegemony according to the historical becoming of the interest which lay beneath. Career has a double nature: from a personal point of view it is a union between the author's production of texts and the author's representation projected by those texts. At the same time, from an ontological point of view it is an extended conception of text: it is the whole discursive order of a peculiar theoretical situation, much more complex than that single act of will which undertook the endeavor.

Here the question is how to understand the effectual rules of coherence and implementation on this background of the author-subject's self-edification: virtually it is the 'interplay' between real life and writing career (Said 1975: 226-228) – fundamentally 'oppositional' because of the antagonistic nature of these two realities – which has to be called rigorously into question by criticism. Any kind of interpretation must return the 'ethical elaboration' of the creative act and the author's ontological nature as a determined subject. These "techno-ethical conditions of writing career" (Said 1975: 231) have to be analyzed as fundamental issues of the ontological project of the intellectuals inside the historical becoming of contemporary postcolonial, post-imperial and, above all, trans-national consciousness. Such an operation could be afforded only though a decisive evaluation and a careful appreciation of the scholar's ethical attitude (both as 'expert' and as intellectual 'amateur') of the employed methodologies and of the social and political conditions of writing 'as and on' culture.

The geospatial problem is that concepts like Orientalism and Occidentalism have not been built upon real entities, instead they refer to congenitally labile discursive fields: they are myths subjected to thousands of ceaseless influences and actualizations according to the will to political, intellectual and social power of every new nation, interest and hegemony involved in the historical becoming. Said appealed to criticism as a "discipline of

detail" (Veeser 2010: 14), grounded in local knowledge as well as in global theory, to state that these myths are not simple misrepresentations of factual realities, instead they are subtle 'spatial pre-conceptualizations' of hegemonic logic. There is not any real Orient or West: such representations earn their 'overdriving status' just because they are objectifications of something 'without concrete history' and therefore they can be used 'to do such things': these ahistorical concepts become 'knowledge' just when they are powerfully used 'to state something'. Hence, the intellectual has the responsibility to figure out what kind of representations they are, which kind of role they had, from and in which 'site' (Said & Donato 1979: 71) they gain their mythological status, and finally "speaking the truth to power" (Said, 1994: 102).

Text and Career as Sites of Power and Resistance

Eccentricity is not only an effective definition of Edward W. Said's critical agency in relationship to his colleagues, but it is moreover the *raison d'être* of his intellectual, biographical and, above all, human existence. In *Beginnings* he wrote:

> [We consider] literature as an eccentric order of repetition, not one of sameness – where the term *repetition* is used in order to avoid such dualities as "the original versus the derivative" […], and where *eccentric* is used in order to emphasize the possibilities for difference within repetition and to signify that while authors, works, periods, and influences are notions that pertain to writing in specific cases, they are really terms used to describe irregularities of varying degrees and qualities within writing as a whole (Said 1975: 12).

'Eccentric' must be also the movement of the philological *Ansatz*, where to begin the interpretation, how to read texts as alternation of 'reception' and 'resistance', how to perceive the contrapuntal (Said 2004: 57-84). As Hussein

eloquently suggests in his excellent analysis, Said's philology assumes the traits of a "technique of trouble" (Hussein 2003: 4) – just as the Palestinian critic described Foucault's genealogy borrowing an expression of R. P. Blackmur (Said 1975: 283) – and Rubin insists on the active and militant force of Said's philology against the association between philology and sterile erudition (Rubin 2003: 869).

Culture and Imperialism has been an effective result of Said's philological-synthetic method of inquiry in the study of the pervasive relationships between texts and imperial hegemonies. His method relied precisely on texts as fundamental 'sites' of authors' realizations in times and places, as proper 'events', and not simple moments of human history, that retain much more importance than that of mere contingent or contextual contours. Said used philology to go beyond the individual text into the larger worlds (Linderberger 2004: 51), a complex of many intertwining histories and geographies, of opposed individual wills and global constituencies, in which every text is productively embedded. This "whole web of often contradictory cultural notations" (Said 2004: 64) must be fully comprehended in order to grasp the effective trace that the text has left in the historical process. What Said carried out with his philological approach was a 'contrapuntal reading', a global and comparative, dialectical but productive criticism, that sought "to take into account all sorts of spatial or geographical and rhetorical practices – inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions – all of them tending to elucidate a complex and uneven topography" (Said 1993: 318). Again, Said recognized a constitutive eccentricity also in his contrapuntal movement because in the chronological line of his analysis he tried to show how those texts "irradiate and interfere with apparently stable and impermeable categories […] presuming that the West and its culture are largely independent of other cultures, and of the worldly pursuits of power, authority, privilege and dominance" (Said 1993: 111).

Brennan highlights how Vico has been Said's starting point to reorient comparative literature and change the fatal directions of theory against both the anti-humanist attempts of structuralism and the disinterest of theory in the "sheer semantic thickness of a literary text" (Brennan 2006: 106-107). Thus, Said recovered already in *Beginnings* the primacy of the author as writing subject in his connection with the massive linguistic production. In this later topical 1993 work, Said fulfilled his contrapuntist perspective in the analysis of authors, texts and socio-geographical contexts developing his 'discovery' of Gramsci. The need to confront the relations of production in power and culture with the pervasivity of the imperial hegemonies and the subalterns' struggle for resistance found an immediate critical response in a different reading of literary masterpieces and in a different assumption of the subaltern texts throughout the history of colonization and imperialism. *Cultural and Imperialism* finally compiled the inventory of "the infinity of traces that the historical process deposited in you" that Said 'discovered' in Gramsci as an uttermost imperative of the critical elaboration (Said 1978: 27).

The chapter "Consolidated Vision" (Said 1993: 73-229) is a paramount example, where Said focused on the relations between power and culture, willingly or unconsciously masked, behind the literary canon. As for the reflection upon Modernism regarding the inner and psychological relations between writing and reality, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said wrote about Austen, Camus, Conrad, Verdi, Flaubert and Kipling because in their 'careers' he philologically 'dug up' those traces of the historical process pointing to the existence of a more pervasive imperialistic cultural model, which was universally embedded in all those civilized societies directly connected to the real places of worldwide power's production and execution. William Spanos claims that *Culture and Imperialism* finally reveals the "specter of the Empire" in disclosing that:

the opposition between the Being of the British and the nonbeing of the colonies' indigenes permeated the body of the cultural discourse – from

> Austen, through Dickens, Thackeray, and Meredith, to Conrad and Kipling
> – of nineteenth-century Britain right down to the capillaries. More
> important for my purposes, he also reveals the profound extent to which
> this deeply inscribed perspective – this being inside the colonial-imperial
> nation – kept British nationalism immune to disturbance from the outside:
> to the immediacy of the violence of imperialist practice in the colonies
> and to the human suffering this predatory violence entailed (Spanos 2007:
> 118).

Modernity brought the clash between metropolis and colonies to the final stage: the mass of eradicated people disrupted the fulfilment of the imperial desire and revealed its massive presence claiming for recognition and agency. When Said confronts the British middle class literary tradition with the Modernist works in the last pages of the second chapter (Spanos 2007: 119) he makes explicit the terrible anxiety that troubled the narrative and representational 'struggles' of writers and intellectuals between the wars. The 'Other' arrived at the heart of the *Imperium* and it could not be assimilated nor repressed by the old exhausted social mechanisms. Hence, literary Modernism would elicit the external history to focus on the aesthetic representation of a self-referential and autotelic fragmented interiority. Here the task of Said's renewed humanism is to trace contrapuntally the common roots of these specters of the Empire, to recognize them in their sites and to restore their denied agency in history.

Similarly, in the chapter "Resistance and Opposition" (Said 1993: 230-340) the Palestinian critic probed the works of Césaire, Fanon, Naipaul, James, Du Bois, Yeats, Ahmad, and others, because in them he found the common experience of resistance against the imperial hegemony and the will to express a different narration of history. As for the inquiry into the will to domination as hegemonic realization of Western identity, it is then necessary then to contrast the study of the will to resistance as historical narratives of the subaltern identities. Said starts with the reciprocal influence between the imperial and the

subaltern cultures in order to delineate a massive net of exchanges and transfers and, moreover, to show how every narrative – every fictional as well as cultural representation – is a 'part' of the entire historical process and not a unique point of view.

Said noticed how the resistance against imperialism was expressed as a reaction to the intellectual consciousness which developed the historical becoming of such hegemony, an attempt to claim "an alternative way of conceiving human history" to "writing back to the metropolitan cultures, disrupting the European narratives of the Orient and Africa, replacing them with either a more playful or a more powerful new narrative style" (Said 1993: 260). Even after decolonization, the resistance against imperialism continued its historical process of constitutionalization to face the constant pressures and pretensions of the many still unresolved political situations. This was because the 'texts' and the 'careers', which concurred with the constitution of political and cultural discourse of the former colonies, were indeed informed by a profound wish of opposition, claim and, above all, reconstruction.

Trans-Humanism against the Grain

In *Representation of the Intellectual* the Columbia professor argued how intellectuals, both as public figures and private authors, had to find inside themselves the vocation to criticism as a humanistic activism, an attitude embedded in the whole complex of human history: a necessary call to duty, an ethical vocation, to contrast the perversion and the insanity of a possible recurrence of our painful past. Such a humanistic attitude demands a valuable synthesis between theory and praxis capable of disrupting the prejudices of all the contenders: it needs an effective project of plural edification and democratic enlightenment, of true respect for the lives and the memories of the unconscious victims of the perverse hegemonic logics. *Culture and Imperialism* has been a formidable 'beginning', an *Ansatz,* using the fundamental term that

Said borrowed from Auerbach, for a contrapuntal analysis of such contemporary issues, a highly incisive demystification of the actual complexity of human civil and political society due to its highly interwoven and continuously problematized interpretation of literary, political, geographical and historical texts and of the biographical and personal issues of the authors of those texts. Philology was not another way to elicit the author in favor of the critic, instead it was a way to scrutinize the whole complexity of the human 'endeavor' that produced that particular text in that precise historical moment and geographical space as a meaningful element of the global historical process. The role of the critic was to find the right angle, the best *Ansatz*, to renew the critical elaboration and the aesthetic appreciation.

What Said really criticized throughout his entire career, in regards to other critical approach, was the systematic anxiety towards self-fulfilled and self-referential planning, something which an umpteenth 'revolutionary model' could easily subsume and spend. Instead, his humanistic project of excavation followed Peirce's adductive reasoning: "What is the word that Peirce uses? Some notion of *abduction*, generalizing from the known facts. A hypothesis of the new situation, projecting forward" (Said 2001: 163). Forward a radically and humanly different future. It is not a mere recommendation for a micro-politic of critical praxis revaluating the rule of the informal, the unconventional, and the dislocated with respect to the rituals and the performances of the metropolitan homologated intellectual. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a different and more human endeavor. *Beginnings* had been Said's first claim for a new critical attitude and new literary interpretation, radically diverging from tradition, and yet intimately bound with it, seeking its efficacy in a renewed conception of the humanist's heritage itself: an intellectual attitude of representation and self-edification of man in secular history and worldly geography.

Said's criticism does not aim to simply review 'facts' and 'sites' for a better interpretation of the truth, but it claims for a will to the historical realization of the

expressive possibilities of man, a man profoundly interested in life. It is a passionate faith in the value of culture as a fundamental "act of emancipation and enlightenment" (Said 2005: 66), a faith in human amelioration through aesthetic elevation and ethical struggle. However, this is a faith in a possibility that must not be presumed, but always intensely sought after, a synthesis of theoretical research and practical work for the constitution of a responsible awareness of the outer reality. Said's Humanism is not a mere tolerant instance, it is a radical one. The contemporary situation is no longer tolerable, its continuous regression must be stopped (Said 2004: 83). A Trans-Humanism for the sake of humanity itself, that is always "against the grain" (Said 2006), always against the hegemonic interest of homologation and subjugation.

NOTES

1. "In one thing above all else is man's indefinite mind definite: in its intention *to be*, an intention which is the zero point of man's existence" (Said 1975: 353).
2. Vico attempted to theorize a different humanistic style based on invention in order to fight against the overwhelming domination of Cartesian method (Said 1975: 359-373).
3. "The mental dictionary for assigning origins to all the diverse articulated languages" (Vico 1984: 64).
4. "Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance man makes himself the measure of all things" (Vico 1984: 60).
5. Said's reading of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (Said 1975: 130-131).
6. Probably Said was connecting this dichotomy with Roland Barthes' distinction between "écrivain" and "écrivant".

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The Place of Servants in Edward Said's *Out of Place*

Abstract I: This article reflects on Edward Said's memoir, *Out of Place*, and the ways that in constructing a sense of the intellectual-in-exile it elides other affective shaping forces in his life, particularly that of the servants. That the most expressly emotional encounter offered in the text is placed in the preface and involves the Said family's *suffragi* (butler), invites a reading that attends to the more fleeting signs of the presence of servants within the text itself. The article concludes by suggesting that tracing the elision of the servants enables a more complex, if less austere, representation of the intellectual.

Abstract II: Questo saggio riflette sui ricordi autobiografici di Edward Said in *Out of Place*, tradotto in italiano con il titolo *Sempre nel posto sbagliato*, e su come, nell'elaborare la figura dell'intellettuale in esilio, la narrazione rimuova altre forze formative importanti per la vita dell'autore dal punto di vista affettivo, in particolare quelle provenienti dai domestici. Che l'incontro più esplicitamente emotivo offerto nel testo sia situato nella prefazione e coinvolga il *suffragi* (maggiordomo) della famiglia di Said incoraggia una lettura che dia peso ai segni più effimeri della presenza dei domestici all'interno del testo stesso. L'articolo suggerisce che l'analisi della rimozione di queste figure 'familiari' permette di rintracciare una più complessa, sebbene meno austera, rappresentazione dell'intellettuale.

> All families invent their parents and children,
> give each of them a story, character, fate, and
> even language. There was always something
> wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit
> in with the world of my parents and four sisters
> (Said 1999: 3).

So opens Edward Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir*, alerting us to the idea, that, as Doring puts it, "autobiographies do things with words", performing the self in a process of self-*formation* by self-*formulation*. What kind of performance of the self does Said offer us in *Out of Place*? Immediate responses, as Ioana Luca demonstrates, focused on Said's role as a public figure in Palestinian politics, "Without exception, the book was initially analyzed either in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or in relation to Said's commitment to the Palestinian cause, as its main representative and spokesman in the United States" (Luca 2006: 131). Weiner's infamous accusation that Said overstated his claim to a Palestinian identity in *OP* has been thoroughly rejected and most recent discussions veer away from his reductive emphasis on authenticity. These readings emphasize instead a more nuanced understanding of 'identity' and acknowledge the connections that *OP* suggests between personal, lived displacements and the idea of the intellectual-as-exile so central to Said's work as a critic. Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that this more sympathetic reading allows Said's autobiography to resonate more widely as a biography of the archetypal intellectual, in a manner that he suggests leads "Turner to claim that *Out of Place* is primarily an allegory of the conditions desirable for the modern intellectual to operate effectively, if not, as Confino claims, a 'parable for the modern, or postmodern condition'" (Moore-Gilbert 2009: 121).

Said himself was careful to characterize *OP* as memoir, rather than autobiography, "because I'm not really a public figure" (Said 1998: 78); but, as Huddart argues, this is unrealistic "given the fact of Said's status as one of the

last public intellectuals" (Huddart 2008: 45). Said's preference for memoir over autobiography indicates both modesty and a desire to side-step the expectations of comprehensive and authoritative coverage associated with the latter. Memoir allows a more circumscribed framework for self-revelation and Said opts for an account of his life focused largely on key educational experiences and institutions, leading up to his success as a literary scholar at Harvard. This approach, Confino argues, gives his eventual emergence as an intellectual an air of inevitability:

> In the story of his life, his childhood thus functions as the origins of the adult intellectual. In an age when grand narratives are debunked, especially by literary critics, Said has provided a one-directional, purposeful, grand narrative of his entire life — his personal and professional life, his childhood, and his adulthood — as understood in similar sets of metaphors — vulnerability, heroism, and out of placeness (Confino 2000: 188).

Confino reminds us of Said's definition of the intellectual as an individual "with a vocation for the art of representing" (Confino 2000: 181) and notes the way the very first sentence of this memoir, with its Proustian cadences, indicates the author's immersion in literary culture. The point here is not that literary mediation compromises the 'truth' of the text (or of Said's telling) but that it requires a reading attuned to its construction 'as a text', including the metaphors that structure it and plot the self's journey to adulthood - and its omissions and elisions. I share Confino's sense of frustration about the neat trajectory *OP* constructs from schoolboy to intellectual and the way this appears to necessitate the elision of so much else.

The epigraph to Confino's essay includes the following from Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*, "There is no such thing as a private intellectual…Nor is there only a public intellectual…There is always the personal inflection and the private sensibility, and those give meaning to what is being

said or written" (Confino 2000: 182). What Confino implies in his discussion is that Said's memoir allows rather limited access to the "personal inflection and private sensibility" that shaped him as an intellectual, so focused is he on establishing himself as a Palestinian intellectual in exile. Two moments in *OP* provide examples of the "over-intellectualizing" (Confino 2000: 187) that Confino notes. The first is when the young Said is reprimanded publicly by his English teacher, Miss Clark, at the Cairo School for American Children (CSAC): she tells the class that Edward has behaved abominably and disgraced the whole class on their field trip by his lack of attention (lagging behind, fidgeting, biting his nails). The second is when 12-year-old Edward is caught stealing a hot-dog from the campfire at summer school in Maine, and is branded "sneaky" by the 17-year-old counsellor, Murray, and threatened with eviction if he doesn't "shape up, and act like the rest of the fellows" (Said 2000: 136). Commenting on these shaming events, Confino says:

> But did Miss Clark really mean to execute an Orientalist humiliation? Sometimes a scolding is only a scolding, and a hot-dog is only a hot-dog. Not every childhood episode is loaded with significant political meanings. In taking his childhood with such self-importance, he provides a story that at times lacks the spontaneity and mischievousness of childhood, creating at times an aura of over-intellectualizing that leads to pretentiousness (Confino 2000:187).

Whatever Miss Clark or Murray as individuals *intended*, the power of their words lies not just in their individual enunciations but that they are saturated with cultural meanings that have an over-determining authority in those contexts. Even though both moments are invoked briefly in *OP*, it is striking that Said recalls them as moments that seem to crystallize the *difference* he represents. And it is an *embodied* difference that is emphasized: fidgeting and biting of nails in the first and the command to "shape up, and act like the other fellows" in the

second, imply an unruly body that betrays the young Edward's best intentions to fit in. So, to my mind, there *is* a great deal at stake here: sometimes a scolding and a hot-dog really *are* politically significant. And they are emotionally and affectively evocative too.

What allows these moments to be read as over-intellectualized and over-politicized is that Said gives us few details of their immediate, *felt* impact before summarizing and containing them. So he asserts that the power of Miss Clark's comments was that they concentrated other comments that surrounded him at home and at GPS "into one unpleasant steel container, into which I was placed, like Jell-O poured into a mould" (Said 2000: 86). Later on, both moments take on a greater significance for Said when he recognizes the shame of Stendhal's Julien Sorel (under the priest's excoriating gaze) as his own, "I felt myself to be a shameful outsider to the world that Miss Clark and Murray wished to exclude me from" (Said 2000: 137). In other words, these moments, appear to have taken shape and been abstracted out of a wider range and more general climate of humiliations (not necessarily comprised exclusively his own personal experiences) that Said retrospectively processes through literary filters which he now – at the time of narration – names as 'orientalist'. Throughout *OP*, there is a strangely pristine aura to the narrative which is seldom snagged by the prickle of something acutely and particularly *felt*. It is as if the rather glacial control that Said describes as dictating decorum at home combined with the force of a colonial education focused on moulding native minds and bodies into "the proper distribution of sentiments and desires" (Stoler 2006: 2) continues to operate as a powerfully constraining force on Said's own accounting of them in the memoir itself.

In the epigraph Confino takes from Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*, he omits the words indicated in italics here, "There is no such thing as a private intellectual, *since the moment you set down words and then publish them you have entered the public world*" (Said 1994b: 9). If publication

inevitably propels the written word, whatever the "personal inflection" or "private sensibility" informing it, into the public, then Said seems acutely aware of this, managing his memoir with care and offering guarded glimpses of the deeply affecting experiences he encounters en route to becoming a public intellectual. For Confino, this results in, "a sense of lack of contingency, of overselectivity, to his story, and of things one would like to know, but which he does not discuss (first among them, his relations with his four sisters)" (Confino 2000:188). To my mind there is an even more evocative elision in *OP*: Said's relationships with the various servants that the family employs. For the brief but regular references to servants that punctuate the text suggest emotional and affective currents that are all the more intriguing because they are never scrutinized as a significant force in Said's account of his life.

The book opens with a brisk assertion that "the over-riding sensation I had was of always being out of place", caught in the tension between Arab and European cultures encapsulated in his name, "Edward", a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said" (Said 2000: 3). But the family life at home described in the early chapters suggests a regime with tightly prescribed codes and manners, where everything and everyone has a precisely designated place. The area of Cairo in which the Saids lived, Zamalek, is described as "a sort of colonial outpost whose tone was set by Europeans with whom we had little or no contact: we built our own world within it" (Said 2000: 22). And yet many of the habits and routines that shape their world appear European, if not Victorian, in tone. When not in school, Edward is expected to spend his time purposefully; the loitering and fibbing of which he is accused, are seen as a worrying lack of direction. The family's leisure time is organized around a routine of "minutely plotted excursions" (Said 2000: 24) that Edward's father, Wadie, insists on filming and which Edward finds excruciatingly staged. Said lists a series of "remedial therapies" including "piano lessons, gymnastics, Sunday School, riding classes, boxing" at whose heart were parents who "determined

my time minute by minute" (Said 2000: 28). These activities, many of them physical, resonate with a familiar English Public School ethos with its emphasis on the importance of disciplining bodies to achieve a properly restrained and civil sensibility. As Ann Stoler argues, under the "racial grammars" of colonial regimes, "certain groups are imagined to have more limited emotive capacities or are endowed with more intense displays of affective expression" (Stoler 2006: 2).

Added to all this, Said describes his parents' concerns about his bodily imperfections: large hands; big chest; too much hair and some of it of the wrong kind; a "long tongue", indicating a lack of verbal decorum; a weak face, especially the mouth – requiring exercises which Said admits doing until he is well past his twenties; poor physical co-ordination and posture so that a back brace was prescribed – and worn. Just before he turns fourteen, Said's father confronts him with a pair of his (Edward's) worn but clean pyjamas, evidence that he has not been having wet dreams and must therefore be masturbating. This last example perhaps provides the most obvious indication of the way the "moral and the physical shaded into each other" (Said 2000: 68) in these regimes of parental control. Later in *OP*, Said remarks on the impossibility of certain kinds of conversation, "my father's past, his money […] Palestine, the simmering inter-familial disagreements were – like sex – off limits to me, a set of issues I couldn't raise or in any way allude to" (Said 2000: 128). Space, too, is demarcated carefully: when his sisters reach puberty, their bedrooms become strictly out of bounds to Edward. He is warned against getting too close to people on buses or trams and against eating or drinking anything from a shop or stand and "above all to regard our home and family as the only refuge in that vast sty of vices around us" (Said 2000: 28). Accompanying his father on the drive to work, the mood and conversation would begin in a chatty, domestic tenor but cease abruptly as they left Zamalek and crossed the bridge to the mainland. The drivers, Faris and Aziz, could only be chatted with when his father was absent. If

Arabic was prohibited decisively at school, it was also restricted at home and its most colloquial form could only be spoken with servants and drivers.

The picture Said paints of his childhood is one of boundaries, restriction and control, extending to encompass *all* aspects of his life. Affection and love seem always to have a disciplinary function attached to them whether it is his father's efforts to make a more robust man of him or his mother's ambitions for him as a pianist. Throughout the account, Said's mother is a powerfully resonant figure, loving and supportive and much loved by Said but also, and not always predictably, harshly critical and manipulative. One of the scenes described most affectingly in the memoir is when mother and son read *Hamlet* aloud together, he taking the male parts, she the female and that of Polonius (Said 2000: 51-52). Here, intimacy happens under cover of a highly performative scene from a play in which the mother/son relationship is pivotal; the literary mediates the more directly personal resonances of this scene, emphasizing Confino's point about the literary mediation of the memoir as a whole.

The strict demarcation of boundaries, limits and controls that dominate Said's account of family life in *OP*, make an effusive encounter described in the preface all the more remarkable and 'out of place'. The preface opens, "*Out of Place* is a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world" (Said 2000: xi) and goes on to describe how Said's diagnosis with leukaemia prompted him to start writing his memoir. Having completed the manuscript, Said traveled to Cairo in November 1998 and he describes a visit he makes to his former neighbours there, the Gindy [sic] family. When he arrives, he is told that somebody is waiting in the kitchen to see him. Said quickly recognizes the "small, wiry man" dressed in the style of an "Upper Egyptian peasant" as Ahmad Hamed "our *suffragi* (butler) for almost three decades, an ironic, fanatically honest and loyal man whom we had all considered a member of the family". Ahmad does not immediately recognize Said, "No, Edward was tall, and he wore glasses. This isn't Edward" (Said 2000: xii) but when he does, there is an effusive embrace,

described at length:

> Suddenly we fell into each other's arms, sobbing with the tears of happy
> reunion and a mourned, irrecoverable time. He talked about how he had
> carried me on his shoulders, how we had chatted in the kitchen, how the
> family celebrated Christmas and New year's, and so on. I was astounded
> that Ahmad so minutely remembered not only the seven of us – parents
> and five children – but also each of my aunts, uncles, and cousins, and my
> grandmother, in addition to a few family friends. And then, as the past
> poured out of him, an old man retired to the distant town of Edfu near
> Aswan, I knew again how fragile, precious, and fleeting were the history
> and circumstances not only gone forever, but basically unrecalled and
> unrecorded except as occasional reminiscence or intermittent
> conversation (Said 2000: xv).

We are not given much information about Ahmad Hamed except as it relates to
his role as the family's *suffragi*, and that he is now retired and is dressed in the
style of a peasant (in dark robe and turban). But the emotional intensity of the
meeting is striking. Returning to it after reading Said's depiction of the carefully
controlled decorum that characterized his home and family life, this encounter
becomes even more remarkable. Not only is there a prolonged, lingering
description of an explicitly emotional encounter but one is struck by the
immediacy and drama with which this moment is described in contrast to the
measured tone in which so much of the memoir itself is narrated, even when
highly charged situations and relationships are being documented. There are
other intriguing questions and resonances: given that so much of the memoir
describes the Said's family life as a tightly circumscribed unit in which servants
make very brief, largely functional appearances, how should we interpret Said's
remark that Hamed was "considered a member of the family" (Said 2000: xv)?
And why, given Hamed's involvement in the daily running of the household, is

Said astounded that he remembers him and his entire extended family in such detail? It was, in many senses, Hamed's *job* to do so – to provide the reproductive labour necessary to keep home and family life going. In an interesting aside to this, in *OP*, Said notes how the ideal American family depicted in his textbooks at CSAC involved the familiar nuclear family along with a household that included "a large black woman housekeeper with an extremely exaggerated expression of either sadness or delight on her face" (Said 2000: 84). But no further reflection is given to solidify the significance *he* attributes to this familiar figure of servitude.

Throughout the memoir there are frequent references to various drivers, servants and cooks but, although these references are invariably warm and affectionate, they are not given sustained attention or reflected upon as part of the affective terrain that the narrator recognizes *explicitly* as having shaped him. So, on the third page of *OP,* Said describes how, as a child when he had been naughty, he would repeat his mother's taunt that "Mummy doesn't love you" or "Auntie Melia doesn't love you". He then describes how he both concludes this exchange and rescues something from the "enveloping gloom" it generates by saying, "All right. Saleh [Auntie Melia's Sudanese driver] loves you" (Said 2000: 5). As well as providing an evocative instance of self-alienation – Said tells us he regularly referred to himself in the second person – this sequence implicates the driver as both at the bottom of a hierarchy (his love can only be invoked and recognized because it doesn't count in the same way that the mother's or his aunt's does) but also at the same time an important source of support. Later, we are told in passing that another of Auntie Melia's drivers helped make his first day at CSAC "easier" by treating him "as no one else did – with deferential, if familiar, courtesy" (Said 2000: 80). Again, although a fleeting reference, it resonates with added intensity in a wider context that is so bereft of comfort or displays of affection.

Two further references to servants are notable. In chapter IV, Said

describes having the occasion to revisit his father's films of the family while in the process of making a BBC documentary about *Culture and Imperialism*. Looking at them again, he is struck by the staged quality of the footage:

> the artificial quality of what we were, a family determined to make itself into a mock little European group despite the Egyptian and Arab surroundings that are only hinted at as an occasional camel, gardener, servant, palm tree, pyramid, or tarbushed chauffeur is briefly caught by the camera's otherwise single-minded focus on the children and assorted relatives (Said 2000: 75).

Here, servants, chauffeurs, gardeners, landmarks, flora and fauna comprise a list of signifiers of a non-European place and culture that pulses all around the contrived 'European' family tableau, underscoring its artifice. Said does not differentiate between these signifiers of Arab/Egyptian culture that expose the tableau as "a mock little European group", nor does he comment on the fact that the physical appearance of those *within* the posed group might more directly have the same effect. The servants are merged with the surroundings that together undermine the group's performance of a European idea of 'family'. What is it about the servants that makes the conflation of native with nativity so easily assumed here? The one photo in *OP* that includes a member of staff doesn't suggest particularly Arab/Egyptian dress: it appears in the second batch of pictures, following page 204 of the text and shows "Ensaf (the nanny)" with Said and his two sisters. Ensaf appears to be wearing a head-tie but one that doesn't invite remark as obviously 'traditional'. The robe and turban worn by Ahmad Hamed is described as the costume of "a formally dressed Upper Egyptian peasant" (Said 2000: xiv), indicating that he has dressed with the proper decorum for *visiting* rather than *working* in the Said family home. The casual reference to servants as part of a list of details indicating the *actual place* in which the family was filmed keeps the servants anchored firmly and

unquestioningly in their place, as the necessary counterpoint to the Said family's aspirations away *from* that place and towards an idea of 'family' constituted elsewhere. If, in the preface, Said asserts that Ahmad Hamed was a man "we had all considered a member of the family" (Said 2000: xv), the filmic archive of 'the family' and Said's discussion of it, suggests a much more ambivalent position that Said does not seem interested in interpreting.

In the only passage where Said reflects more directly and self-consciously on the role of 'the staff' in families like his, he muses:

> "Our" Ahmed, the Dirliks' Hassan, the Fahoums' Mohammed, were almost talismanic in their presence; they turned up in our conversations as staples of our quotidian diet, like the garden or the house, and *it felt as if they were our possessions, much like old family retainers in Tolstoy*. [...] I remember wrestling with Ahmed, conversing about the deeper meaning of life and religion with Hassan, talking cars and drivers with Aziz, much to my parents' disapproval. *I felt that I was like the servants in the controlled energy that had no license to appear* during the many hours of service, but talking to them gave me a sense of freedom and release – illusory of course – that made me happy for the time spent in such encounters (Said 2000: 197, emphasis added).

The terms in which Said describes the value of the servants' emotional and reproductive labour is, again, intriguingly ambivalent: the "Our" in quotation marks implies an unease about the possessive, objectification of the staff, but the parallel drawn with "old family retainers in Tolstoy" immediately deflects this critique from the immediacy of his own lived location and transposes it to a canonical literary location. And, though he recognizes the physical, intellectual and emotional intimacies that he shares with the various servants, its significance is entirely focused on the impact on *him* and the release from his parents' prescriptions that they collectively enable him to experience. The irony again

here is that the servants who must perforce always *know their place* help Said to escape from *his* designated place. Said has written repeatedly about the interconnectedness of all human lives, perhaps most memorably in *Culture and Imperialism* where he argues:

> There is no Archimedean point beyond the question from which to answer it; there is no vantage outside the actuality of relationships among cultures, among unequal imperial and non-imperial powers, among us and others; no one has the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting the world free from the encumbering interests and engagements of the ongoing relationships themselves. *We are, so to speak, of the connections, not outside and beyond them* (Said 1994a: 65, emphasis added).

That his identification with the servants is pursued here so exclusively in terms of his own sense of being out of place, undisturbed by any possible contrapuntal resonances, is surprising. In several places in the text, he acknowledges and remarks on the wealth and privilege of the circumstances in which he was raised, noting visits to the opera and theatre as well as being sent to elite schools in Egypt and the US. Despite such acknowledgment, there remains a sense that Said's account of his route to becoming an intellectual cannot accommodate the messy, ordinary and everyday affects encountered along the way. Just before his fourteenth birthday, Said starts attending Victoria College where he is presented with *The School Handbook*, the first rule of which he notes "turned us into "natives" by stipulating that only English was permitted and warning that "Anyone caught speaking other languages will be severely punished". If at home colloquial Arabic was relegated to the servants, at school Arabic became "our haven, a criminalized discourse" (Said 2000: 184). In a review of *OP*, the Egyptian novelist, Ahdaf Soueif draws parallels between the circumstances of her own and Said's lives:

The life lived simultaneously in English and Arabic, the imagining of oneself into the comics or novels we read, *the response to the different and authentic energy in the conversation and company of maids and drivers* (Soueif 2004: 255, emphasis added).

Soueif succinctly conveys the polarized terms in which hers and Said's worlds were organized, suggesting possibilities for imaginative immersion of the self in one (English literature) and a more reactive response in the other (energetic conversations in Arabic with servants). That Said does not reflect more substantively on the impact of "the different and authentic energy" that he too ascribes to servants in *OP*, resonates with his arguments in *Orientalism*, about the astonishing lack of any *lived* sense of the orient and Orientals in European-authored texts, "the almost total absence in contemporary Western culture of the Orient as a *genuinely felt and experienced* force" (Said 1991: 19, emphasis added). It is as if the edifice of 'the home' that the Said parents construct, in all its rigidity and constraint, cannot be evaded – or be made to accommodate other experiences and feelings, even in retrospect.

It also indicates an uncharacteristically unreflective understanding of 'home', when considered in relation to the wider context of his writings on 'homeland'. LHM Ling also comments on the lack of critical engagement with a more intimate idea of 'home' in Said's oeuvre:

Said remained intriguingly unreflective, however, about home. In focusing almost exclusively on 'the exilic condition', home became an assumption, an unquestioned origin, a reified way of being. Said did not theorise on how home may relate differently to different subjectivities like daughters and servants in contrast to sons and patriarchs. His contrapuntal method registered seemingly disparate events or conditions or cognitions of being but he did not see an underlying commonality binding them, perhaps

producing them (Ling 2007: 136).

I agree with this suggestion that 'home' retains a taken-for-granted quality in Said's critical writings and, though Ling does not discuss *OP*, her arguments are suggestive in relation to the curiously austere account of home life offered in it. To return to Confino's argument about Said's over-selectivity in narrating his path towards becoming an intellectual, it strikes me that Said's investment in writing as a public event seems to necessitate a certain decorum in his memoir, whether to protect loved ones, himself, or an idea of the intellectual itself. This decorum helps explain a pervasive sense that expressive emotion of any kind appears out of place in *Out of Place*. So, Hamed and Said's emotional reunion is carefully placed in the preface and the energy, care and conversations of the servants only occasionally and fleetingly offer glimpses of another order of experience and affect in Said's life. These glimpses hint at an emotional and experiential hinterland that readers can only imaginatively reconstruct. One reader particularly well-placed to populate some of this hinterland is one of Said's neighbours Nadia Gindi (the family in whose home Said's encounter with Hamed takes place). She offers some interesting reflections in 'On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's *Out of Place*', suggesting a much noisier and more intimate interaction between the two families than the memoir indicates, with the children in and out of each other's homes. She also tells the story of how Am Sayed, the Said's cook, became a standing joke between the two families when, in response to yet another chore, he gave a despairing cry, "But Sayed has only got two hands!" (Gindi 2000: 288). Details of this kind might have snagged Said's account in suggestive and engaging ways and allowed "the controlled energy" (Said 2000: 197) that the decorum of the Said household prohibited both he and the servants from expressing to disturb the smooth narrative surface of *Out of Place*. As it is, Said's account of his family home remains stubbornly un-revealing. It is perhaps in *After the Last Sky*, in the text Said wrote to accompany Jean Mohr's photographs of Palestinian life in the

occupied territories, that Said's most personally expressive prose appears. There he recognizes the importance of ordinary everyday routines and the role of women (and men) in the interior spaces of home that allow a life of some sort to be lived with a degree of dignity. In one evocative passage he describes the sense of being a displaced people by using the house or home as metaphor; a collective Palestinian identity he suggests provides both a sense of solidarity but is also restrictive:

> The structure of your situation is such that being inside is a privilege that is an affliction, like being hemmed in by the house you own. Yes, an open door is necessary for passing between inside and outside, but it is also an avenue used by others to enter. Even though we are inside our world, there is no preventing others from getting in, overhearing us, decoding our private messages, violating our privacy (Said & Mohr 1986: 52-53).

This metaphor and the sense of "being hemmed in by the house you own" seems to me to resonate beyond the immediate context of Said's desire to convey the complex contradictions of being a Palestinian, to convey something of the disabling and enabling confines of *his* own home. Constraints of space allow me only to gesture here to the greater sense of affect and emotion inscribed in *After the Last Sky*; but reading it alongside *Out of Place* provides suggestive resonances that disturb the careful construction of the pristine intellectual self that the memoir is so anxious to construct. Attending to the glimpses we are given in *OP* of other lives and energies pulsing beneath the text's designated focus and narrative decorum, allows a more complicated portrait of the intellectual-as-exile to emerge than perhaps Said was comfortable with, or able to present himself. Gregg and Seigworth argue that "affect is persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and amongst the world's obstinancies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations" (Gregg & Seigworth 2010: 1). My reading of *OP* here is an attempt to

bring more sharply into focus those affective currents that Said recognizes but finds so little place for in *Out of Place.* I argue for a reading of the memoir that allows what is relegated to the margins to snag and disturb the carefully controlled narration Said offers; it is perhaps then, to suggest a *contrapuntal* reading. In the final paragraph of *Out of Place*, Said eschews ideas of a "solid self" and reflects that "I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents" (Said 2000: 295). While the flux this implies is slightly at odds with the careful control that has characterized the preceding narration, the emotional and affective currents associated with the servants goes some way in keeping this fluidity in play.

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Lars Jensen

Reading Edward Said in Myanmar: Traveling Theories after *Culture and Imperialism* (1)

Abstract I: Twenty years after its publication, *Culture and Imperialism* continues to be seen as part of the defining moment of postcolonial readings of our contemporary world. The anniversary marks an opportunity to revisit the landscape of culture and imperialism as envisaged by Edward Said, but also to discuss the productiveness and limitations of its applicability to our contemporary world. This article's first part focuses on the relevance of Said's critique of culture and imperialism today, while the second part addresses how its legacy can be used as a point of departure to examine one of the lesser discussed Anglophone postcolonial sites.

Abstract II: A vent'anni dalla sua uscita, *Culture and Imperialism* continua ad essere visto come parte del momento di definizione delle letture postcoloniali della nostra contemporaneità. Il suo anniversario costituisce un'opportunità per rivisitare il panorama della cultura e dell'imperialismo così come li immaginava Edward Said, ma anche per discutere produttività e limiti della sua applicabilità al nostro mondo contemporaneo. La prima parte di questo articolo si concentra sull'attuale rilevanza della critica di Said alla cultura e all'imperialismo, mentre la seconda riflette su come la sua eredità può essere usata quale punto di partenza per esaminare uno dei luoghi meno discussi della postcolonialità anglofona.

The twentieth anniversary of the publication of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) – a work which invoked the legacy of empire as a clearly

identifiable thread, determining the political and cultural lives of former colonies – is an opportune moment to consider changes to the way in which we now conceive both empire and colony, and north and south. In this article I will initially situate *Culture and Imperialism* in the broader landscape of worldwide changes it sought to address, then examine the extent to which its arguments can be deemed relevant to international relations in 2013, and finally consider one specific location, from which a more contextualised reading of this contemporary global landscape can unfold. My own first visit to Myanmar in December 2012, immediately after Barack Obama, brought my attention to Myanmar, which was a relatively peripheral colony. I read *Culture and Imperialism* on the beach in Myanmar as part of my preparation for the AISCLI conference in Rome.

The world seems to have rapidly distanced itself from the decolonisation and emancipist thought paradigm which was characterised by its leading proponents including Frantz Fanon, Aimé Cesaire, Amilcar Cabral, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, George Lamming and Chinua Achebe. Although their successors have contributed to the complexities of decolonisation writings, and the dismantlement of empire – this last is now becoming a distant reminder of a colonially derived hierarchical ranking of cultures (2).

Portugal, which held the last major European empire, faces the fortieth year since the collapse of its rule in 1974; its former colonies are preparing for the anniversary of their independence. As these preparations occur, the Mozambican government attempts to avoid a wave of Portuguese migrants, who are fleeing the financial crisis and the resulting austerity measures and consequent lack of opportunities. The situation illustrates how dramatically some post-imperial relations have altered, as well as the continuity (rather than any severance) of those relationships. This example raises the broader question of how, in light of our greater temporal distance to colonial times, we might read contemporary cultural texts set in former colonial locations.

Culture and Imperialism's Setting

A large proportion of *Culture and Imperialism* involves detailed engagements with canonised literature of British and French imperialism. Even if that represents an important step in understanding how imperialism depends on cultural formations to sustain it, the discussion becomes uneven in its analysis of European imperialism. Yet Said, at other moments within the same work, writes of 'European cultures' as if they operate by extension from the British and French imperial experience, which he has at other instances designated as unique, because of its scope (particularly, of course, that of the British empire).

There is an inconsistency which haunts *Culture and Imperialism*, and which has, when Said's *Orientalism* is also considered, annoyed various other postcolonial discourses, most notably in the Hispanophone world, where some see postcolonialism as a domain of English literature studies on the American East Coast. Though I regard this critique as reductive and misguided, there is a point in recollecting that the British and French empires were culturally determined by their literature in comparison with other forms of European colonialisms, where it was not primarily through literary concerns that colonialism was supported or discussed. Historiography, geography, anthropology and more generally science (as also mentioned by Said) have played, in some contexts, a far more important role. The inference, which Said also draws, is that there is a danger in looking only for manifest imperialist modes of thinking, modes of producing academic texts about the colonial subjects and the imperial self. What others have labelled the colonial archive is a much broader phenomenon and the ways of accessing this often far more indirect, but still formative. To engage with *Culture and Imperialism*'s vision in 2013 requires accommodating (much better than *Culture and Imperialism* was able to do at its moment of conceptualisation), the heterogeneous yet also hegemonic pan-European narrative of imperialism.

The second issue I raise in connection with reading *Culture and Imperialism* relates to the engaging matter of how we understand the question of legacy. Said points out that contemporary European culture is also shaped by the historical experience of colonial rule, and the sense of privilege it bestowed upon Europeans, regardless of whether they were directly involved or indirectly implicated in colonialism – there were no alternative spaces to these two positions. Yet he devoted little discussion to show how this sense of privilege continues after the end of empire. Whereas his reading enables an initial mapping out through the ambiguous positions offered by the archetypal imperial texts, it does not develop beyond this mapping, because it then considers the emergence of the US as the new imperial power. This shift is easily sustained by the historical shift in power from Europe to the US, or what can also be described as a readjustment of the power balance between Europe and the US in the transatlantic hegemony. However, it nonetheless historicises European imperialism, and as such underplays the realignment of Europe within a transatlantic axis of a now more transatlantic hegemony dominated by the Americans. This realignment is easily detected in European support for American led imperial campaigns from Korea to Afghanistan, with the notable exception of Vietnam.

In the reconfigured relationship, Europe occupies a clearly supporting role with limited influence, as Tony Blair discovered in the preparations to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. But simultaneously with the loss of military power, which was always hampered by intense inter-European rivalry, Europe has acquired a new position as a major global economic power block through the rise of the EU. The destructive agricultural policies vis-a-vis the global South demonstrate a continued imperial dominance. That this is currently accompanied by domestic destructive policies in crisis-struck Europe underlines the significance of the empire is never being merely about dominance abroad, it is also about imperial thinking at home. The EU as a power block has replaced the national post-

empires, whose increasingly impotent brinksmanship had become a source of political embarrassment (from the Suez Crisis, over the Falkland War to Berlusconi and Sarkozy's friendship with Gaddafi).

The military decline of national post-imperial European governments and rise of Europe as an economic power block has become dramatically clearer after *Culture and Imperialism* was published. But parts of this development could also not be foreseen in Said's book, because of the way he identified the nature of the British-French empires and the American empire. *Culture and Imperialism* devotes considerable attention to their differences. Said detects the cultural connectedness yet separateness that governs the European empires (captured for example in the parting shot of Fielding and Aziz in *A Passage to India*), regarding an American approach based on detached rule. These identified differences create a problem for Said's desire to treat the two forms of empires within the same narrative framework. Because to read complex literature's flaws and inconsistencies, as they produce a narrative of empire, is a very different exercise from analysing books on policy, media discourse and similar types of texts, which are used to produce the American understanding of their rationale for empire building.

Other types of texts about the British empire would seem to be more immediately on a par with the American situation. It appears much harder to find an American match for the way imperial culture was produced in Britain and France in the 19th and early 20th centuries; Melville, Twain and Said's other candidates don't convince him of a similar American way of producing imperial sensibilities to that of the British or French. Yet, within a British imperial context there are popular fictions, imagery, colonial shows, advertisements and which have been discussed, for example, in the work of Patrick Brantlinger (whom Said does mention) and in Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*. Brantlinger and McClintock's writing provides two useful reference points in terms of producing imperial sensibilities through popular culture in ways more immediately on a par

with the American situation. What remains enabling about Said's anti-imperialism work is that it serves the crucial purpose of showing empire for what it was, what it continues to do, and how it continues to be supported – most stridently and profoundly disturbingly – in academia. It is clear from Said's writing that academia serves an important nurturing role for imperialism in providing supposedly neutral and impeccable evidence, in support of the cause of empire. The question is, what is empire today, when it can neither be seen as exclusively European or American, but is describable as neoliberalism disguised as 'the market' that determines the fate of governments, democratic as well as undemocratic, while it destroys the social fabric of societies.

This system appears quite disconnected from the way in which the historical empires produced cultural sensibilities, whether in the form of a European superiority to be 'mimicked' by the colonial during the European reign of the first global imperial phase, or during its second phase, when the American way of life became the model to strive for. This model can be most clearly seen when it is launched by Truman in his four point speech in 1949 widely understood as the inauguration of the development regime of thought. While *Culture and Imperialism* identifies the three phases of empire, it deals with them inadequately collectively. To elaborate: the European imperial phase is complex, the American imperial phase is relatively flat and the third phase is discussed primarily in terms of signs of an emerging new order. Yet if we wish to understand the three phases, we need to know each of their dynamics, and how they relate to the same overall structure. *Culture and Imperialism* does not quite provide that, even if it does gesture towards some of the driving mechanisms of the comprehensive imperial framework; whiteness, discourse on terrorism, ecological planetary crisis, economic destruction of societal structures (in particular Said's reference to the urban American crisis). These issues, which have provided the main reference points of a critique of the current neoliberal order, are clearly singled out by Said as both emerging and emergency driven

reference points. It is also notable that they have become even more urgent reference points within the emergent new imperial structure.

This brings us to the point of the Europe imagined by Said in the early 1990s and its position in relation to this new structure. *Culture and Imperialism* hints at rather than produces a reading of a reconfigured Europe. It uses *gast arbeiter* and other terms to indicate a broader pan-European moral panic concerning the migrant other, as the imperial confrontation has moved from colonial periphery to the former metropolitan centre. 'Former' because the European colonial regime is no more, nor has Europe built new metropolitan centres, even if it has maintained its instrumental centres of capitalism, such as the City of London and Frankfurt.

It is becoming difficult to identify a metropolitan centre, or metropolitan centres, as global capitalism annihilates the remnants of a former colonial order, driven by a taken for granted Eurocentricity, and replaces it with a new system. Yet what is this new order in terms of its cultural controls? Said's reading of Europe of the early 1990s is limited by his chosen framework. His European empires remain historical, and they remain Britain and France. It is as if they are weighed down by an excess of history. A more contemporary focus in *Culture and Imperialism* would have enabled a more thorough consideration of the different ways in which racism has become reconceptualised as cultural racism, as the rebirth of the no longer tenable position of biologically informed ways of articulating racism deeply connected to colonialism.

The complex issue of race is related to the question of how to engage with the notion of white privilege in the face of the provincialisation of Europe (and the West), demographically (already) and in terms of declining control over the global South. It is to this question of how the global North's presence in the global South can be understood in the aftermath of European imperialism that I now turn.

Reading *Culture and Imperialism* in Myanmar

The new imperial formation, the neoliberal order, is one way of bringing the focus to the realm of the former colonies in the global South. The neoliberal order has in former colonies replaced the colonial hegemony introduced by the Europeans, who also provided the colonials with a distorted form of European modernity, whose deliverance was always conditioned by the need to preserve European presence and interests in the colony. The colonial power sought to protect its involvements by orchestrating its inevitable withdrawal in such a way that colonialism as a distributive system of privilege was not disrupted by the process of decolonisation.

Myanmar represents one of the most intriguing postcolonial sites. Its colonial position inside the British Empire was subordinate to that of India. It achieved, as Thant Myint-U has pointed out in his history of Myanmar, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, its independence in the wake of the wider South Asian independence. The process of emancipation ended in one of the contemporary world's longest reigning military rules which may be coming to an end. Two books have in very different ways sought to capture the complexity of contemporary Myanmar in a form of political and culturally informed travel writing. Both of them point clearly to the importance of history as the backdrop against which contemporary developments can be understood. Emma Larkin, in her *Finding George Orwell in Burma* (2004), uses George Orwell's writing on Burma, particularly *Burmese Days*, to look for traces of Orwell, but also of British colonial remains in Myanmar. Thant Myint-U, in his second book on Myanmar, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia* (2011), reads contemporary Myanmar as not only a product of its national history, but also as a local contemporary product of historical, contemporary and emerging tensions between Asia's two demographic giants, India and China. These two books prove useful points of departure in a discussion on what role may still be assigned to (European) empire in the postcolonial, but also neoliberal, world.

Orwell is a largely absent figure in *Orientalism* and of merely marginal interest in *Culture and Imperialism*. Hence my argument here is not premised on an overlapping concern or claims between Larkin's search and Orwell's presence in Burma as an 'orientalist' and colonialist in Said's work. What I want to question instead is how Larkin's search for traces of Orwell can be understood in the context of contemporary Myanmar's political reality. Larkin is looking for remnants of Orwell's presence and through this her book becomes infused with a nostalgic search for a lost Burma (Larkin 2004: 187). This can be easily established as the desire for an alternative to the dismal picture she paints of a contemporary Myanmar, where political oppression takes place on an egregious scale. Yet, this potentially disturbing resurrection of the ghost of colonialism as offering a 'better world' than the present regime is counterbalanced with passages addressing Orwell's racism and his role as an active participant in the colonial administration of Burma. A considerable amount of the book is taken up by her tracing the influence of Burma on Orwell's writing after his return to Great Britain.

Larkin finds in particular in *Animal Farm* and *1984* representations of a political system to be a chillingly accurate prevision of contemporary Myanmar with its 'thugocracy' of generals and extreme forms of repression that penetrates every person's daily life. This reading, however, produces the current regime in Orwell's prevision as a mere projection of the colonial regime. This enables a flaw in the narrative, because if the current regime is simply evil, as she suggests, and if it is the result of an Orwellian vision caused by his experience of British colonialism in Burma, then colonialism is also necessarily unmitigated evil, and runs counter to the ambiguous space she creates for British colonialism.

Larkin traces the footsteps of Orwell's stay in Myanmar and looks for places he has either described in *Burmese Days* and/or mentioned in other writings, or where others have placed him through local cultural memory. But she also embarks on a collective reading exercise with local Burmese interested

in Orwell's work. Or, as we don't really know this as readers, we are at least persuaded by her to read his writings with her. This produces in the book a curious blend of tracing Orwell's presence in Burma, but also of reinstating Orwell as a figure in Myanmar. This represents a familiar dilemma similar to that produced by the establishment of 'colonial tourism' in South East Asia more generally, but also in Myanmar more specifically (3).

Colonial tourism operates as a trope through which Westerners, and Europeans in particular, are strangely familiarised with local settings through the remnants and reconstructions of colonial architecture, which they recognise as European in origin, and supported by multitudes of underpaid staff catering to the tourist's whim. While the practice of rereading Orwell in a Myanmar context with the locals is obviously not a manifestation of that kind of colonial nostalgia, it still privileges Orwell in Myanmar for Larkin's reader as a figure of identification. It resurrects Orwell in his Burmese context, when colonialism and even Burma itself are no longer there. The book then, in spite of its also critical distancing from certain aspects of Orwell's racist acts in Burma, involuntarily makes colonialism more palatable than the sheerly evil the current regime. Yet, how will we measure which of the two regimes is more oppressive?

Larkin preserves an ambiguous space for power relations in colonial Burma premised on how we read ambiguities more freely into power relations of the past, against a monolithically evil contemporary present day regime. This juxtaposition again invites comparisons with the reading of regimes elsewhere in the postcolonial world, which have betrayed the ideals of emancipation. This begs the question about whether colonialism was such a bad thing, after all, and leaves a space to entertain the idea that European colonialism did bring about an order, even if it was hierarchically race based and, because of this, repressive. Yet, revisiting that colonial history would immediately bring to the surface atrocities from Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean to the Belgian machinery of genocide in the Congo. In Burma such a history of British atrocities

can be drawn up. It is this wider history of British atrocities in Burma that Larkin keeps away from while focusing on the repressions of the contemporary regime.

Remnants of colonial history, in the shape of colonial architecture or the English gardens in colonial highland areas – say in Darjeeling, Shillong and Ooty in India; White Highlands in Kenya; Cameron Highlands in Malaysia – produce an image of colonialism accompanied by nostalgia and a guilt-free zone, because they are exonerated from the practice of alienating colonial subjects from their own land to make way for the tea and coffee plantations for colonialists eager to escape the heat of the lower lying tropical areas. In a similar fashion contemporary tourism trading in colonial nostalgia reproduces a relationship between the tourist and the local underpaid staff that is reminiscent of the relationship between the colonists and their colonial subjects that it is impossible not to read it as an eager re-embracement of an order where 'white' European equalled unquestionable superiority. In particular, as Europe's grasp of its 'always on top' (4) position is slipping away, because the neoliberal order that has replaced it entails no automatic recognition of culture based superiority, but instead inserts a globalised affluent elite wherever it comes from.

Thant Myint-U in his recent travel, history and contemporary politics book, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the New Crossroads of Asia*, also makes reference to hill stations Maymyo in Myanmar, and Shillong, in Assam. In his book, grand scale civilisation history of the entire region from India across China works as a backdrop against which he situates contemporary Myanmar (which he refers to as Burma) in a politically contested landscape. Shillong as a small footnote in a time limited albeit vastly scaled British Empire becomes a local parenthesis in the long term evolution of his regional history. This is, of course, one way of provincializing British imperial history, to capture Dipesh Chakrabarty's warning against even critical accounts of the European empires' tendency to exclude other narrativisations of regional and national histories in Asia.

The mouldy buildings of mock English Tudor from the later part of the colonial era that also clutter the landscape at Pyin-Oo-Lwin/Maymyo immediately east of Mandalay (Myint-U 2011: 56) become in Myint-U's narrative remnants of an alienating colonial presence that has long since been overtaken by other presences, with possibly much further reaching consequences. His reading of contemporary Myanmar seeks to locate it within the broader region of Southeast Asia and more specifically as an emerging prominent location as the result of demographic, political, and economic changes brought to the region by a globalising world, which no longer has the North Atlantic as the sole axis of political power, influence and eventually affluence. China and India are already demographically the world's centre. The political and economic change reworking their societies has caused in Myint-U's view a reorientation towards the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait. Myanmar provides access to the Malacca Strait and has enormous potential for becoming a site for enormous resource extraction and capital investment. This would make the country the major land connection between the two regional power houses.

The British Empire and its aftermath is in Myint-U's account primarily a phase that risks to be overplayed in the context of rapidly changing cultural-political landscapes of South and Southeast Asia. The military regime that has ruled Myanmar since 1962 has not so much eradicated a prior British colonial presence as it has made it redundant. The dramatic but short-lived Japanese presence during the second world war had a profound impact on the direction of the Burmese journey towards independence, in what was in Myint-U's reading a British imperial outpost, whose main purpose was to work as a buffer zone to protect the real British interest – India (Myint-U 2011: 63).

To question what culture and imperialism might mean in contemporary Myanmar in the context of Myint-U's book is to ask about the imperial-cultural aspirations of China and India in Myanmar, and to what extent they are a continuation of the Western imperial presence, and to what degree they are

something else. Myint-U's vision is of Myanmar as the result of a vacuum after the departure of the British, rather than seeing the British empire as merely another phase in the long-term regional history. While the British Empire is not a parenthesis yet in Myanmar's history, Myint-U's book emphasises the importance of looking at the other civilisation historical movements that predate and follow the presence of the British empire. The rise of some of these empires took place over hundreds of years, a couple of them originated in Myanmar itself. This provides an important corrective against over-emphasising the impact of British colonialism in Myanmar. This has, of course, to be balanced against the displacement of the kings and elite of Myanmar during colonialism, which destroyed the fabric of Burmese society. And it has to be measured against the colonial military training, which continued as a model post-independence, and from which current political leaders were recruited. Ironically, the Myanmar political top brass trained at the former British hill station, Pyin-Oo-Lwin.

To ask what *Culture and Imperialism* means in contemporary Myanmar is a far more difficult question to answer, and my insights are clearly limited by what I have read and what I have seen on my recent journey in Myanmar. Orwell's significance for contemporary Burmese identity formation is easily exaggerated, as is Kipling's importance in his texts on British Burma. Here, such texts too easily end up as European/Western projections of a European historical presence that lends weight to a later Western presence, through tourism and other travel. Even within such generalising categories as the European or Westerner it is an open question, what Kipling and Orwell mean to the average Scandinavian, Italian or German traveller/tourist. Even more so, when the tourist gaze upon Myanmar becomes more globalised.

What Myint-U so interestingly maps out through his travels is not so much in relation to Myanmar itself, as in the interrelations between Myanmar and its emerging global powerhouse neighbours. He describes interesting overlaps that are historically configured, and one of the limited tropes within this universe, is

British colonialism in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Yet this history remains clearly a sideshow to the relationship with China, whose history can, of course, be understood as a reaction against first European imperial encroachments and then American intimidation. However, China also manifests a completely different kind of globalisation in the making that can be read critically as a neoliberal regime which a communist party somewhat paradoxically has chosen to align itself with.

Myint-U identifies the Chinese presence as far more consequential than the Indian at the moment, but even if India should elevate the gateway to the East in terms of its importance to the Indian political-economic system, it is hard to see that Indian presence in terms of an aftermath of the British Empire. This is where *Culture and Imperialism* is marked, as perhaps such books inevitably are, because it seeks to capture a moment in history, as it is disappearing, as defining criteria of the contemporary. This perspective doesn't make postcolonialism (or for that matter imperialism) a redundant term, but both terms need to be seen in the light of a vanishing historical horizon, which nonetheless, defined modern institutions such as states and how they are still understood and accepted in the post-1945 world order. This has, however, to be balanced against the massive transformations that are taking place within that order. 'Culture' as an analytical category is one way to capture continuities and transformations. This is where *Culture and Imperialism* can most productively be read in the light of Said's essays, 'Traveling Theory' (1993) and 'Traveling Theory Reconsidered' (2000), where he seeks to understand how theories are transformed as they are relocated to deal with other contexts, the same obviously goes for transformations across time. My article is a small contribution towards this relocation of *Culture and Imperialism*.

I finish this essay with the following insight delivered by Thant Myint-U, which I think captures the dilemma of reading too much or too little into *Culture and Imperialism*'s identification of the importance of the pillars of power left

behind after a British colonial era and a pax Americana influence on the world generally, and the region of Southeast Asia more specifically:

> The relative decline of the West is often exaggerated. The West is still far richer, its universities second-to-none and the armed forces of the United States have no parallel. But here, in this small but strategic slice of Asia, the post-Western world is perhaps more evident than anywhere else. Walking around in Maymyo, the West seems more a memory and something very far away, sanctions and boycotts having kept out businesses and aid programmes that would otherwise exist, leaving the landscape to be crafted by others. The money to be made, the fears to be addressed, the relations that need to be fostered, have become Asian, and close at hand. And in this intra-Asian world, relations with China are paramount. Neither India nor the countries of southeast Asia have so far been able to compete with what China is offering and able to deliver (Myint-U 2011: 74-75).

NOTES

1. There is much debate over whether to use the official name, Myanmar, or to use the colonial name Burma as a point of non-recognition of the regime which renamed the country. As a postcolonialist I can think of arguments for and against both names, and similar debates have taken place in other places as colonial names have been replaced (the debate over Mumbai versus Bombay is one of the more protracted ones). I have decided to stay with the official name, because it is the official name, and because it seems to me that reverting to the colonial name involves its own problems.

2. Notably when Said wrote *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* decolonization had occurred within living memory.

3. This is clearly brought out in a passage, where she contrasts the boisterous days of colonial social life in the hills east of Mandalay with the dull

experience of staying in one of the surviving colonial buildings in Pyin-U-Lwin (Larkin 2004: 38-45).

4. My reference here is to Said's review article in 2003 of Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects*, where he begins the review by pondering why European self-assertiveness in terms of what its empires were and did has been on the rise again, not least in the work of Niall Ferguson.

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Bodies in Transit: The Imperial Mechanism of Biopolitics

Abstract I: Said's reflection on the complicities between cultures and imperialisms suggests possible readings of discourses of power in transit through history. The discursive body of the empire evolves applying the mechanism of biopolitics as a way of ordering bodies. This imperial mechanism will be examined in action as a means of controlling life and death through the enumeration of bodies in transit: that of the colonised and of the migrant. This will be done by reading J. M. Coetzee's *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* (a novel, 1976) and Marco Martinelli's *Rumore di acque* (a play, 2010). The applicability of Said's theory to bodies in transit will not only show the relevance of the ambiguous alliance between culture and empire, but it will also highlight the complex articulations of forms of necropolitcs in late modernity, as Achille Mbembe and others have underlined.

Abstract II: La riflessione di Said sulla complicità tra cultura e imperialismo suggerisce possibili letture dei discorsi del potere in transito nella Storia. La retorica dell'impero si evolve applicando il meccanismo della biopolitica come una modalità per imporre ordine ai corpi. Questa strategia dell'impero e del potere sarà esaminata nell'atto di controllare la vita e la morte attraverso l'enumerazione di corpi in transito: quelli dei colonizzati e dei migranti. L'analisi si svilupperà intorno a *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* di J. M. Coetzee (un romanzo del 1976) e *Rumore di acque* di Marco Martinelli (un testo teatrale del 2010). Applicare la teoria saidiana ai corpi in transito rivela l'alleanza ambigua tra cultura e impero, e anche mette in luce

le complesse articolazioni della necropolitica nella tarda modernità, come Achille Mbembe e altri studiosi hanno evidenziato.

In this essay, the relevance of a postcolonial reading of the contemporary cultural and political world scene will be assessed in order to achieve an understanding of ways in which the mechanisms of power operate in late modernity, applying Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* alongside new theoretical proposals and areas of inquiry. The focus will be restricted to practices of *bio* and *necro* politics observed through the figure of death. Scholars in different fields and from disparate ideological positions have shared a deep interest in how discourses and strategies of power and subjection operate in history. Certainly, postcolonial studies have taken this line in order to give public and political voice to subaltern and minority discourses. Drawing on Said's reflection on the complicity between culture and imperialism, this essay will observe discourses of power in history looking at two historical applications that trace a line of conjunction between the past and the present, as well as between two different geopolitical areas: eighteenth-century Southern Africa and twenty-first-century Italy. The theoretical aim is twofold: to analyse the complicity between culture and empire in different times, places, and narratives, with a specific focus on its relevance for the present; and to verify whether and how this complicity, as theorised by Said, contains the germs of its own deterioration and decline, the energy for resistance and change. In practice, Said's theoretical system (as applied to the reading of literary texts) will be functional to an interpretation of the arrival of migrants and their probable daily actions in Italy nowadays.

A postcolonial approach is suitable for a vision both of the general and of the particular as it allows for an exploration of cultural transnational trends and local productions using flexible theoretical and methodological tools. Therefore, Said's argument in *Culture and Imperialism* will be coupled with Achille

Mbembe's analysis of necropolitics to observe the specific application of power over death through the mechanism of biopolitics in history (Mbembe 2003). In *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Toni Negri interpret the actual collusion between biopolitics and empire as a marker of a new geography of power that is global, sovereign, and non-centred in administering peace and justice, order and democracy, in its own terms. This 'empire' is a new political subject born out of post-fordist America, as Hardt and Negri argue. It operates across borders through global fluxes, and feeds on biopolitical economy: the management of social life substitutes for the centrality of labour as the engine of economic production. Drawing on Foucault's studies of biopolitics and coupling them with Marx's and Deleuze and Guattari's analyses of capitalism, Hardt and Negri underline how empire is a paradigmatic form of biopower in that it aims at defining and controlling the entirety of social life. This reading is a basic background on which a study of the transit of empire in history may be proposed, in order to justify the choice of radically different literary texts (as in this essay) that, however, conspicuously stage the mechanism of necropolitics operating within the working of the empire. Necropolitics is actually an ideological and pragmatic tool of the empire. In Hardt and Negri's view, empire in late modernity is different from the practice of imperialism in colonial times. However the concept of empire will be taken here as evidence of the continuity and transit of power in history.

The topos of the body, both physical and metaphorical, will be useful so as to concentrate on the essential target of power: the human body. The material and discursive body of the empire moves and evolves in time using biopolitics as a way of controlling bodies, with the meaning of applying a rational, monitoring, and classifying order. In this essay, this imperial mechanism will be examined in action as a means of ordering life and death through the enumeration of bodies in transit: those of the colonised and those of the migrants. A vast and increasing literature is available on refugee studies, dealing

with the migrants' conditions in a state of exception (Agamben 1995, 2003). Also, the theoretical issues of surveillance, punishment, discipline, control, terror, and of the imposition of boundaries, have been used to contextualise and describe modern practices of power over individual migrants and groups. Forms of biopolitics over migration make plain the overwhelming need of identifying and fixing bodies in times, spatial locations, boundaries, pictures, and words. In Foucault's vision, these biopolitical acts do not only provoke physical death, but also bring about indirect modes of exposing bodies to death, both physical and political. Elaborating and expanding on Foucault's argument, scholars from a variety of fields and perspectives have explored the connection between life and death, biology and law, sovereignty and freedom (Mezzadra 2001, 2004; Cutro 2005).

It would be out of the scope of this essay to overview this massive body of scholarly literature. Instead, Achille Mbembe's argument in 'Necropolitics' will be adopted, since it updates to modernity the idea of seventeenth-century political theory according to which the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides in the authority of deciding who can live and who must die. With reference to specific examples drawn from South Africa and Nigeria, Mbembe observes how biopolitics operates in late modern history, identifying both conditions of war and material elimination of bodies, and conditions of objectification of human beings who survive in situations of death-in-life. It applies to the colonised at the time of European empires, and to the migrants in the present context, for example, African immigrants to Europe and specifically to Italy. Through the idea of death, the friction between the two forms of empire – colonial and late modern – exposes the dangers that the rhetoric of risk and preventive self-defence, disseminated in contemporary societies, represents for human bodies and lives (Beck 1992, 2008).

Said's theories about the ambiguous collusion between culture and empire will be analysed pursuing the representation and control of death, and

the enumeration of deaths in J. M. Coetzee's *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* and in Marco Martinelli's *Noise in the Waters* (1). It is a daring comparative reading, since the texts are apparently different. However, they are amazingly similar in that the central idea supporting both stories is exactly the mechanism of biopolitics perpetrated through counting bodies. Appropriately, the main character in Coetzee's *Narrative* defines himself "a hero of enumeration" (Coetzee 2004: 80), and the protagonist of *Noise in the Waters* speaks of himself as "the lord of numbers" (Martinelli 2011: 17). This correspondence and its implications are crucial to the argument of this essay.

Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee's *Narrative*, written in 1974, is the first-person account of Jacobus, a Boer elephant-hunter (as he initially defines himself) who travels in southern Africa in 1760. Fiction is portrayed as historically documented and a number of references are quoted to support the truthfulness of Jacobus's "deposition" (Coetzee 2004: 123-5). However, points of view are fractioned in a postmodern way, because the narrative is introduced by two external characters who belong to different historical periods: S. J. Coetzee, a university professor who is said to have used Jacobus Coetzee's narrative for his lectures, and J. M. Coetzee, his son, the hypothetical translator of Jacobus's narrative and of S. J. Coetzee's introduction. *Noise in the Waters* is a play written in 2010 by Marco Martinelli, the playwright of the Ravenna theatre company Teatro delle Albe. On the stage, a shabby soldier, probably a General, articulates a monologue describing his work on a non-defined island – possibly Lampedusa or Sicily – in the Mediterranean Sea between Africa and Italy. He has been instructed to count and order the people in transit on the island. Unfortunately, most of them are dead. Corpses bear pieces of information and numbers – which recall those of Auschwitz – but numbers are often unreadable and corpses unrecognisable. They have been disfigured and mutilated by desperation, disease, 'sharks', and water.

In different ways, literary genres, styles, places, and times, both texts tell fictional stories of movement: Jacobus's travelling in southern Africa and the African migrants' passing across the island in search of better shores. In both tales, the point of view is that of the main character. Their perspectives are worth examining as they do not only reveal the protagonists' visions of the world, but also describe the hegemonic worldviews of their times. In a "contrapuntal and […] nomadic" reading of the texts (Said 1993: xxix), as Said advises, Jacobus's and the General's viewpoints explain how empire has changed in time and how it works in different circumstances still holding sovereignty over life and death. These two characters help to focus on the disquieting alliance between cultures and empires.

In *The Narrative*, while factually conveying his travelling tale, Jacobus ideologically constructs himself as the voice of colonial power. His standpoint is univocal, absolute, and self-righteous. His identity as an individual gradually expands to comprise all contrasting definitions into one omnipotent vision of the self. He is a "father" and a "master" to his porters, "an evangelist" bringing to the heathen the gospel of the sparrow (Coetzee 2004: 101), the colonial 'I' who represents, dominates, and conquers uncivilised lands and peoples, and he is the divine 'eye' who orders the world: "I am all that I see" (Coetzee 2004: 79), "I command his life" (Coetzee 2004: 81), "A world without me is inconceivable" (Coetzee 2004: 106). Jacobus's all-inclusive identity radically separates his life from that of others – who are Hottentots, bushmen, and animals – and also justifies his work as "a tamer of the wild" (Coetzee 2004: 78). As such, Jacobus fears and abhors solitude; he needs the life of others in order to prove his authority and power by determining their fate: "Over them I pronounced sentence of death" (Coetzee 2004: 101), "they [the servants] died the day I cast them out of my mind" (Coetzee 2004: 106), "Through their deaths I […] again asserted my reality" (Coetzee 2004: 106). As a hero of enumeration within the hegemonic mechanism, Jacobus presides over countless deaths (Coetzee 2004:

77), leaves behind him "a mountain of skin, bones, inedible gristle, and excrements [that constitutes his] dispersed pyramid to life, [his] logic of salvation, [his] metaphysical meat" (Coetzee 2004: 79). In this ontological vision, killing becomes an act of faith. It guarantees material supremacy and survival, and also ensures immortality in history and an afterlife. Arrogating to himself the right and the duty of deciding who will live and who must die, Jacobus loses his individual identity while becoming, as he states, "a tool in the hands of history" (Coetzee 2004: 106): the personification of hegemony, borrowing a Gramscian term, that survives and continues across times. Complicit acquiescent militant tools, like Jacobus, serve as the conduits of hegemonic power across history and guarantee the permanence of its master narrative.

In *Noise in the Waters* (2) the mechanism of the empire works through counting the deaths precisely as it does in *The Narrative*. The rationalistic logic of ordering, counting, and cataloguing, displays a supreme ordering obsession: "He who does not understand number does not understand death" (Coetzee 2004: 80), quotes Jacobus. In colonial times, this taxonomic delirium of empire is expressed through the creation of collections and imperial exhibitions as encyclopaedic miniatures of the *grandeur* of the empire. Counting recurs in Roger Casement's *Congo Report* as an enumeration of horrors perpetrated by the colonisers in Congo. Casement's denunciation is a classical example of that colonial mania well documented in imperial museums such as that of Tervuren in Belgium.

A comparative reading of *Noise in the Waters* next to Coetzee's *Narrative*, taking Said's suggestion of a secular critical perspective, brings to light discordant elements coexisting within the historical material conditions of production and use of the texts. The colonial model referred to in *The Narrative* is, in fact, quite different from the system of domination described in *Noise in the Waters*. Accordingly, the representation of power in the two texts refers to different versions of empire. While Coetzee's *Narrative* investigates the

beginning of European settlement in Africa and the unbalanced racial relationship between colonisers and colonised, Martinelli's *Noise in the Waters* concerns forms of neo-imperialism brought about by globalisation. While land occupation is Jacobus's concern, the creation and protection of boundaries is the General's one. And while the objectification of the colonised underpins the unbalanced relation with the colonisers, the invention of the enemy is the rhetorical task of neo-imperialisms. Hence, the representation of power concentrates on two main models: material colonial occupation, on the one side, and cultural neo-imperialism, on the other side. Said's analysis is again relevant, in this regard, as it highlights the passage in history from material to discursive imperialisms.

In the Western World, hegemonic discourses regarding immigration have produced a rhetoric of threat, danger, and risk that justifies the refusal and rejection of migrant fluxes and of people in transit. The rationalist and rationalising need of counting reveals a qualitative principle in the *Narrative* based on race (people are identified by race, they are Hottentots, bushmen, Boers), whereas it is quantitative in *Noise in the Waters*, based on numbers (people bear numbers as markers of identity). If *The Narrative* represents colonial hegemony as a project to be carried on (as Jacobus does), *Noise in the Waters* attempts to describe a new mode of Western imperialism: the working of discursive empire as a self-validating, self-supporting, and self-referential administrative mechanism. The General in *Noise in the Waters* speaks from within this present historical condition governed by a widespread negative discourse regarding foreigners and immigrants, and he acts consistently neither proclaiming judgement nor taking position on the issue of migration, but just counting. In this context, counting is a mathematical procedure and a symbolic act. As such it is based on taxonomic criteria and ideological principles. The rationale behind Jacobus's killing the bushmen and the Hottentots is, in fact, racial and religious difference – a metaphysical difference – a principle

according to which the right to live is bestowed. Conversely, the General does not kill; he uses numbers because he has been told to. He is a specific figure of the historical present he lives in, and in which the text is embedded. His behaviour allows a better understanding of the transit of bodies and imperial discourses into the present.

The play opens and closes within a frame stating the failure of the counting and classifying procedure. The incipit quotes:

> Can anyone read this? / Can anyone make this out? / What a mess […]
> At least make out the numbers / Line them up in order" (Martinelli 2011: 4).
> The conclusion rounds up the subject with a corresponding vagueness: "I
> can't make it out Mister Secretary sir / (silence) / I can't make it out /
> (silence) / No, I can't make it out at all / (silence) / I-CAN'T-MAKE-IT-
> OOOUTTT! (Martinelli 2011: 39)

Performing the unrewarding duty of counting corpses, the General reads numbers as markers of identification trying to match them with dates of birth and personal information. But the majority of the corpses are impossible to identify:

> I lose my bearings / 3398 / unknown / 569 / unknown" (Martinelli 2011:
> 26). While struggling to decode the signs, the General invents identities
> for the bodies, he makes up names and stories of death: "This is a kid /
> 2917 / 2917 / Grab a name from the hat / Yusuf / Yusuf sounds good /
> This kid from Western Sahara" (Martinelli 2011: 6). "44 / Sakinah / 44 /
> she's not alone either / together with another thirty / Nigerian girls / little
> girls almost / precious cargo (Martinelli 2011: 15).

The General's ambiguous manoeuvre to concoct life-stories for the migrants does not voice human pity, rather serves the purpose of filling the void left by

the missing details which prevent him from doing his job. Still, his story is a version of official history.

His affiliation to the discourse of the empire is not established along the lines of a total adherence to the imperial project, as is for Jacobus, whose work is first and foremost an act of faith. Jacobus is aware of his mission, he chooses and wants to participate – actively and coherently – in the consolidation of European hegemony. On the contrary, the General is only a gear in the mechanism of empire, a bureaucrat who does not take any responsibility for his actions. More generally, in the system of power represented in *Noise in the Waters*, nobody seems to be responsible, or take responsibility, for what is actually happening. The process of the construction of domination is getting over ethics, de-personalising the agents of morality, and turning the seemingly rational mechanism of classification into a necessarily unavoidable procedure. Anyway, the system works:

> Sure our / policy is grand / on this island all are welcome / on this island you're all welcome / spirits / we refuse no one / open door policy / my own invention / I'm the wisest of all / I'm the lord of numbers / count on me / […] Order and clarity / All in a row / Listed just right / One dead body after another / Up-to-date list (Martinelli 2011: 17).

Using a telling inversion, the General ironically speaks of acceptance though leaving the inevitability of the migrants' condition unquestioned. Responsibility for the migrants' death is deflected on external uncontrollable agents in order to de-personalise the unchangeable, perennial, and indispensable order of the empire. Indifferent ferocious fish may be a cause:

> no respect for the law, these fish / no respect for anyone / […] damn you / you keep me / me / from doing my work / of lining them up of giving a name / […] Who do you think you are? / The official gravediggers? / The

gravediggers of empire? / Who appointed you? / At least let me count
them first, hey? / [...] can't you tell / one number from another? / Can't
you be more exact? / What's all this chaos? (Martinelli 2011: 27-28).

Not bearing responsibility for his actions – as nobody does – the General may be recognised as a 'servant' of the kind Maurizio Viroli qualifies in *The Liberty of Servants*. Offering a historical and philosophical reading of the political situation of Italy in the last decades – in particular the periods of Berlusconi's government – Viroli theorises how Italians have been ruled by implementing an idea of freedom which have been distorted and manipulated. It is the freedom of servants, not of citizens. According to Viroli, while citizens are free because they are not dominated by the arbitrary will of an individual or a group, on the contrary, the freedom of servants dictates that no rightful obstacles are imposed on persons pursuing individual goals, because acknowledgements, prises, and gifts are bestowed by the capricious governing power on people pleasing it. In this light, the General is willing to perform his duty not because he believes in this mission, as Jacobus does, but because he finally hopes to move from the dirty job to the rooms of power where people eat caviar and drink champagne (Martinelli 2011: 36). Jacobus and the General are two different emissaries of the empires they represent and work for. They are consistently embedded in the production, spreading, and use of the cultures supporting empires in different historical times. They signal the uninterrupted evolution of the practice and discourse of empire. The General's submission to the unavoidable mechanism of power, his shedding of responsibility and of political critical stance may aptly express the inevitability of economic neo-liberalism as a recognisable form of neo-empire. Applied to the power over life and death, this form of empire is directed to people who are not conceived as subjects, but perceived as inferior, doomed, and economically irrelevant.

For a better understanding of the association between bodies in transit – colonised and migrant people – and their commercial use in life and death, it is

worth turning to studies on the Atlantic slave trade. This detour allows a closer emphasis on the monetary value of people within the wider architecture of the empire. In the field of Atlantic studies it emerges that, for the slaves, understanding numeracy and acquiring the ability to count meant to enter the financial network of the sea: the trading of people and goods through the sea understood both as practical medium and discursive myth. While this move marked a step towards a possible freedom, it also signified the inclusion of the slaves into the liberal economic system that the transatlantic trade was promoting. For freed slaves like Olaudah Equiano, grasping the complexity of financial life in the Atlantic world order, as he describes it in his *Narrative*, also meant inquiring into the boundaries of liberty and the puzzles of economic justice in the Atlantic (Wickman 2011). The Atlantic economy was in fact based on the evaluation and selling of living bodies, while dead bodies were a commercial loss. Bodies were money (3). To count lives and deaths was symbolically to estimate wealth. The monetary evaluation of bodies in slavery still continues today, even if legal ownership over humans is not permitted. The history of the slave trade is a transcultural subject, Michael Zeuske argues discussing slavery in a global perspective (Zeuske 2012). His reading focuses on the sinister and ambiguous association between empire and slavery, neo-liberal economy and globalisation, living and dead bodies. Taking this line, the relationship between the victims in the texts might be interpreted through the conceptual lens of new slavery, also supported by the complicity of the institutions pressing for a bureaucratic normalization that facilitates the continuation and exploitation of new slaves.

The calculation of deaths is omnipresent in Jackie Kay's *The Lamplighter* (4) that traces back and rewrites the history of slavery searching for and commemorating the missing faces dispersed under the sea. The strategy of listing is a means of resuscitating names and lives silenced in the darkness of the

see and of slavery. But deaths are countless and the slave's story shapes a choral poetic memory and a litany:

> The endless deaths in us, the windowless deaths, / The deaths in the dungeons, / The deaths at sea / The deaths in the ship / The deaths in the new land / The deaths ties to the trees / The deaths in the plantation / The deaths in the shacks / The tobacco deaths, the sugar deaths. / the broken-hearted deaths. The love-missed and missing / Deaths. The in-your-face Deaths. The stowed away deaths. / The sea deaths. The deaths at sea (Kay 2008: 21).

On a different note, the archival inventory of the shipping news records death through enumeration, filling a catalogue of the apparently common and banal events on the ship: "Buryed a woman slave of the flus. No. 29. Buryed a girl slave. No. 74" (Kay 2008: 45). Two opposing tales offer contrasting versions of slave history as the arrogant rhetoric of empire obstructs the slaves' mourning voices dialogically intertwined along the spirals of past and present times.

To give names is yet another mode of resuscitating memory to life, as the General roughly does in *Noise in the Waters* trying to fabricate lives of stereotyped identities for the victims. But the dead's actual stories are left unspoken and unknown. Differently, in *Turner*, David Dabydeen poetically entwines naming and invention to give voice to the stillborn child, Turner, and to the African land through the desire of transfiguration and the figure of recognition. In order to join the child with his land, the son with the mother, and reconcile them with their past history of humiliation and stereotyping, words and names should be revived to start a new life.

If the validity of the first assumption of this essay has been assessed – namely the transit of the body of empire in history through the mechanism of biopolitics – one needs to consider the metanarrative levels of the texts to verify whether the complicity of cultures and imperialisms contains the germs of

dissent and the energy for change (which is the second aim of this essay). In the examined texts, the enumeration of bodies, both as an effective strategy of domination and a metaphysical system of knowledge, is presented as undisputed tactics of power. No dissent is clearly expressed against this mechanism of the empire. However, in spite of the absence of critical judgement, the readers of J. M. Coetzee's *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* and the audience of Marco Martinelli's *Noise in the Waters* do not endorse the imperial view. According to a postcolonial reading of texts as political discourses, the responsibility for dissent is deflected on the readers and the audience. Using different techniques, Coetzee and Martinelli transfer on to their public the ethical duty of adopting an acute, inquiring, and disputing perspective. "Be a little more humane, / sharks!" (Martinelli 2011: 30), ironically shouts the General in *Noises in the Waters* shadowing a possible line of resistance out of the seemingly inevitable global cage that restrains him. As Said claims in *Culture and Imperialism*, paradoxically imperialism pushed distant worlds close to each other. This paper tried to show that a contrapuntal and nomadic perspective helps to identify opposing affiliations and ambiguous connections coexisting within the concrete historical experience that the texts narrate. *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* and *Noise in the Waters* describe the imperial system of biopolitics in different though comparable ways, aiming at an identical final point, typical of postcolonial writing, that is the political involvement of the audience in the active struggle against arrogant, enslaving, and omnipresent practices of power.

NOTES

1. References to J. M. Coetzee's *The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee* will be included in the main text as *Coetzee 2004*. References to Marco Martinelli's *Noise in the Waters* will be included in the main text as *Martinelli 2011*.

2. The Italian version of *Noise in the Waters – Rumore di acque* – is the second production of Teatro delle Albe's triptych *Ravenna-Mazara 2010* by Marco Martinelli, Ermanna Montanari, and Alessandro Renda.

3. The registration of life and property is the basic principle of the Domesday Book, a census commissioned by William the Conqueror in 1086. This archive allowed control over people in order to impose taxation. By extension, its function was to commodify life, to make life a potential object of property in the hands of the ruling power.

4. Radio drama broadcast on BBC3 on 25 March 2007 on occasion of the celebrations for the bicentennial anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British colonies.

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Postcolonial Antarctica and the Memory of the Empire of Ice

Abstract I: In 2012 the anniversary of Robert Falcon Scott's arrival at the South Pole and of his death in the ice on his return journey has prompted new research on Scott and the Antarctic continent. The renaissance of Antarctic interests shows that Antarctica continues to be a source of fascination for the Western world as a place for the expression of individual bravery and endurance. However, the role of Antarctica as an imperial space in the British cultural imagination is now superseded by its status of postcolonial territory 'owned' both by the former imperial nations and by postcolonial countries such as India or New Zealand. The 1959 Antarctic Treaty recognized to Great Britain an influential role in the international agreements that established international cooperation promoting scientific activity. At the same time, many other countries are directly involved in the project of making the 'white continent' a natural reserve entirely devoted to science.

Abstract II: L'anniversario dell'arrivo al Polo Sud da parte di Robert Falcon Scott nel 2012, seguito dalla sua tragica morte fra i ghiacci sulla via del ritorno, ha ridato slancio allo studio di Scott e del continente antartico. La rinascita dell'interesse per l'Antartide dimostra che il continente continua a esercitare un grande fascino sul mondo occidentale, come luogo in cui si esprimono coraggio e resistenza fisica. Il ruolo dell'Antartide in quanto spazio dell'immaginario britannico, tuttavia, appare oggi superato dal suo stato di territorio postcoloniale 'posseduto' sia dalle ex-potenze coloniali che dalle nazioni postcoloniali, come India o Nuova Zelanda. Il trattato antartico del

1959 ha riconosciuto alla Gran Bretagna un ruolo di primo piano all'interno degli accordi internazionali che hanno consolidato la cooperazione per la ricerca scientifica. Allo stesso tempo, molti altri paesi sono coinvolti nel progetto di fare del 'continente bianco' una riserva naturale interamente dedicata alla scienza.

Antarctica is not properly a postcolonial country: it has no native population, no specific language or culture; its history seems to coincide with the history of European explorations. According to the general perception, Antarctica is a frozen continent dotted with scientific bases, where scientists from different nations cooperate in the name of scientific research. Alternatively, it is a snowy waste, threatening the world as it melts (Walton 2013). Certainly, Antarctica plays a crucial role in our planet's contemporary scientific and environmental challenges; it also played a crucial role in the first decades of the twentieth century as the last 'terra incognita' on earth.

One hundred years ago, in 1912, the race between Britain and Norway for the South Pole aimed at redeeming the ideology of the imperial conquest and was driven by a combination of geopolitical, imaginative and scientific ambitions. At the same time, according to Chris Turney, 1912 heralded the dawn of a new age in our understanding of the natural world (Turney 2012). Men like Scott, Shackleton and others embodied the values of the British Empire, but were also scientific observers of a new, extreme and still unknown environment. The *Terra Nova* Expedition led by Scott enjoyed the strong support of the Royal Geographical Society, an institution in which scientific concerns and imperial attitudes overlapped. Scott and his party reached the South Pole on 17 January 1912, but discovered that the rival expedition led by Amundsen had reached the Pole one month earlier. On their return journey, the five Englishmen faced unexpected difficulties and overwhelming physical burdens. Assailed by an unusually harsh weather, after the death of two of them, the three survivors were

forced in their tent only 11 miles from a supply depot. Their frozen bodies were found nine months later, together with their letters and journals (1).

Scott's adventures fascinated the public because the Antarctic continent appeared an imaginative space for heroic endeavour, unencumbered by the troubling legacy of imperial exploitation which determined the efforts of the explorers in Africa and elsewhere. In a 'clean' white space, Europeans could pursue an 'unashamed heroism'. Moreover, with the absence of a native population, Antarctica appeared to offer unprecedented opportunities for the colonial tradition of place naming. For the explorers, naming a new place stressed the fact that their expeditions had been successful and useful as a patriotic act of conquest (2). Francis Spufford (1997) suggests the passage from 'imperial eyes' to 'imperial ice': imperial ice represents a metaphor that encodes the desire for apparently harmless conquest, both at national and individual level. The imperial Polar expeditions redefined British identity during the Edwardian era and the Antarctic ice constituted a final monument to the imperial ethos (Dutton 2009: 377-379).

On the whole, Britain's interest in Antarctica was a direct consequence of the nation's imperial ambitions. Captain Cook's eighteenth-century voyages (and his first glimpses on Antarctica) expressed not only scientific curiosity, but also the global aspirations of a maritime nation. Scott himself sailed south from Britain along an imperial corridor, passing through South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, before departing for Antarctica. His crew carried the beliefs and practices of an imperial nation to the extreme South. The conquest of the South Pole was of greater symbolic than strategic or commercial value and was meant to mark the expansion of the British Empire to the southern limits of the earth.

The appeal of the Antarctic has been intensified over the last years by a growing interest in the scientific achievements of the so-called Heroic Age of Polar exploration (Brazzelli 2012). The scientific aims of the *Terra Nova*,

symbolised by the 35 pounds of geological specimens the Polar party carried until their death, witnessed the selflessness and idealism of the enterprise. Likewise, the Emperor Penguins' eggs carried back to England by Apsley Cherry-Garrard would have helped solve the mystery of the 'missing link' between birds and reptiles. In addition, photographs, together with maps and charts, played their part in establishing the ultimate proof of the British conquest of the Pole. While stones, penguins' eggs and meteorological data were gathered in order to establish the history of Antarctica and of the earth itself, the tragedy of Scott and his party strengthened a peculiarly British vision of tragic heroic figures, battling against a cruel destiny (3).

While the global impact of the race to the South Pole is undeniable, the renewed interest in the story of *Scott of the Antarctic* is worth considering. The *Message to the Public* Scott wrote at the end of his journals (Scott 2003: 476-477) remains the cornerstone of Scott's heroic reputation. Criticisms of Scott began to grow only at the end of the 1950s. At that time, Britain embarked on a process of self-examination and developed a narrative of external weakness and internal decay. The debacle of Suez, the process of decolonization, the general anxiety about the crumbling economic achievements generated an extensive literature devoted to national decline. Scott and his heroic culture began to be questioned. At the end of the 1970s, Roland Huntford's critical review of Scott as an incompetent bungler achieved a wide popularity and remains highly influential (Huntford 1979). However, several writers and scholars did continue to defend Scott's reputation in the 1980s and 1990s; among them, Ranulph Fiennes (2004) (4).

The contemporary designation of the Antarctic as the 'continent for science' is a representation (5), a very powerful one, indeed, which resonates with the icescape itself, a giant white laboratory with its connotations of objectivity and impartiality (Glasberg 2008: 640-641). The tales of endurance, self-sacrifice and technological innovation that marked the 1912 expedition laid

the foundation for modern scientific exploration. Antarctica's image shifted from a purely symbolic prize to a region connected to global processes of environmental and cultural change. Nowadays, at a time when competition for resources is placing the Antarctic Treaty System under increasing pressure, the history of the expeditions of the Heroic Age exposes the interdependence of science and empire.

The survey of the Antarctic environment played a central role in shaping the history of the continent. Even after the end of the Heroic Age of Scott and Shackleton, the mapping of Antarctica by the British was never an unproblematic affair. In 1943-1944 Operation Tabarin, the code name for a secret naval operation designed to raise British imperial profile in the South Atlantic, was implemented. This was clearly connected with the preservation of Britain's South Atlantic influence (Dodds 2002: 13-33). In 1948, the film *Scott of the Antarctic*, directed by Charles Frend, played a relevant role in mythologising the Empire on the verge of its disappearance and once again celebrated ideals of service, duty and sacrifice connected with the frozen South: at the time of its release, Britain was engaged in an expensive and dangerous game of territorial occupation, mapping and diplomatic work (Dodds 2012a). The zenith of British Antarctic endeavour was the successful outcome of the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition under the leadership of Fuchs and Hillary in 1958. The crossing of Antarctica was meant to be the high point of British and Commonwealth Polar achievement as men and their machines triumphed against the most hostile natural landscape on earth.

By the end of the 1950s hundreds of thousands of pounds had been spent on land-based surveying, air photography, logistical support and base maintenance in order to preserve British claims to Antarctica. The political status of the uninhabited Antarctic continent and surrounding seas emerged as a relevant feature of international politics at the end of the 1950s. The Washington conference (15 October-1 December 1959) was undoubtedly a remarkable

diplomatic watershed. It did create a legal and political framework for future international cooperation in the region. Claimant states had to accept the suspension of territorial claims; arguably the Treaty was a geopolitical and legal victory for the British delegation, as territorial claims were preserved for the duration of the Treaty. In any case, it implied a relevant act of international collaboration in an era dominated by postcolonial change and anti-colonial rebellions in Africa, Asia and elsewhere.

The Antarctic Treaty was signed in 1959 after drawn-out negotiations. The two superpowers, USA and USSR, agreed not to let the Cold War conflict propagate in Antarctica. The International Geophysical Year (1957-58) pointed out how political interest could be sublimated into science; manifestation of national presence as well as rivalry was constructively translated into competition and cooperation in research. However, the decolonization process had hardly begun. The Antarctic club of twelve nations (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States) was based on the exclusion of many emerging countries. Therefore, to enhance a wider legitimacy and credibility, in the 1980s India, Brazil and China were accepted as Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. Other Third World nations gradually followed. India especially stressed the fact that an active interest in Antarctica had grown in areas of the world without a lengthy record of exploratory and scientific achievements. Today a basic conflict persists between the rhetoric of scientific internationalism and the actual dominance of national interests. Postcolonial engagement has pinpointed this anachronism, suggesting that the political and organizational framework of Antarctic research should be reconsidered.

The Antarctic Treaty addressed the major elements of the 'Antarctic problem', especially differing attitudes to territorial claims and the potential conflict over the overlapping claims of Chile, Argentina and the United Kingdom in the Antarctic Peninsula. It formally demilitarized the Antarctic continent (and

the surrounding ocean) and established a nuclear-free zone (Haward 2011). These provisions were supplemented by the development of an innovative regime of inspection. The Antarctic Treaty is a security instrument and, with its focus on science, provides one of the earliest examples of what is now termed environmental security. The signing of the Antarctic Treaty recognized that it is in the interest of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue for ever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Moreover, international scientific cooperation requires that all the parties involved share their information with one another.

Article IV froze sovereignty positions and thus facilitated the emergence of science as the determining factor in shaping access to terrain and scientific data (S.V. Scott 2011). In a sense, the Treaty protected the status quo ante. Unlike in other parts of the world, however, it showed that it was still possible for man to be a 'good colonizer'. After its entry into force, all the claimant states continued to believe that their territorial claims were intact and fundamentally unchanged. The Antarctic Treaty parties, like the British imperialists of the past, argued that their claims to scientific and environmental authority were being used in the interests of all humankind. As a whole, the Antarctic Treaty System is a multi-faceted process of international cooperation from which participants undoubtedly accrue multiple benefits. On the other hand, the Antarctic Treaty offers a good example of hegemonic power. It could be viewed as a simple rehearsal of old colonial claims, but also as an act of imperialism on the part of the USA. The USA had made no territorial claims in Antarctica but would be allowed to go anywhere on the continent and to use the continent for all but non-peaceful activities.

However, the 1982 invasion of the Falklands by the Argentine army reasserted Britain's determination to maintain an advantage in that remote area of the world, regardless of the prevailing international pressure to solve a basically colonial situation. The link between patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia and British identity was clearly revealed during the 1982 military campaign.

Other recent developments in Antarctic geopolitics demonstrate the limits of the Antarctic Treaty System. On 17 October 2007 Britain reinforced its three major territorial claims in Antarctica, by using the Law of the Seas, to claim strategic seabeds and thus potentially valuable areas of oil reserves. This was in clear defiance of the Antarctic Treaty System, according to which no claims can be acted upon under its regime. While the British claim had little to do with science, it clearly shows that a new approach to the government of Antarctica is necessary.

Science is a *raison d'être* in Antarctica, involving material condition, governance structure and epistemology. Since the International Geophysical Year and the Antarctic Treaty, science has taken up the burden of human active presence and has shaped its own vision of the future of Antarctica. The implications of science have become the hegemonic modes of engagement in a vast territory in which the traditional forces of nation and capital markets have been put in abeyance. Although the 1959 Treaty required the phasing out of purely military occupation and goals in Antarctica, demilitarization has not resulted in the disappearance of the military in the region. Rather, the after-effects of militarization can be traced in the Antarctic built environment, human cultures and languages. Science too is inscribed into military traces and national narratives. According to Peder Roberts, Antarctic science has always been a "geopolitical performance" (Roberts 2012: 157). Thus, the conception of the Antarctic as a conflict-free space is clearly challenged, because the establishment of national bases was always an act of competition, a marker of national and ideological strength.

Klaus Dodds writes that "ushering a new era of continental exploration and international rivalry, the Antarctic is now as much a symbol of global anxiety, as it is a site of ongoing scientific collaboration and knowledge exchange – snow, ice, and the cold are new geopolitical and scientific front lines" (2012b: 1). On the one hand, Antarctica remains one of the last vestiges of

colonial expression and masculine endeavor retaining notions of territorial sovereignty expressed through environmental and scientific activities. New postcolonial perspectives are opened up by the reinterpretation of the Antarctic past developed in countries such as Argentina, Chile, New Zealand and Australia – that is nations that did not take part in the Antarctic history of exploration, but boast a geographical closeness to the southern continent.

On the other hand, Dodds stresses the fact that Antarctica has not figured prominently in the literature dealing with postcolonialism. And yet, despite the fact that there were no indigenous Antarctic peoples who resisted foreign domination, Dodds advocates connecting Antarctic politics to a postcolonial perspective (Dodds 2012b: 60-67). The term postcolonial critically highlights how systems of colonial domination whether in the form of production of knowledge or the prevailing geopolitics of international order, persist in the contemporary era. Dodds regards Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, Argentina and the USA as engaged in imperial Antarctic policies. According to Dodds, Article IV established a pattern freezing the colonial map for the duration of the Treaty, at the same time allowing the development of new modes of scientific cooperation among different national communities.

In a questionable way, the 1959 Antarctic Treaty provided UK with a prominent role in the international agreements, while enabling territorial strife to be replaced by international cooperation through which an increasing number of countries are directly involved in the project of making the 'white continent' a natural reserve devoted to peaceful scientific developments. Antarctica has shifted from a blank backdrop for Empire or even a symbol of purification to becoming a part of an environmentally endangered planet. Thus, the language Antarctica speaks nowadays has changed from imperial rhetoric to an environmental creed and seems to warn mankind on the consequences of a universal, global 'ruin'. In this sense, according to Elena Glasberg, the Southern continent is the site and source of a new kind of "environmental melancholy"

(Glasberg 2011). Its significance as 'symbol of our time' goes hand in hand with its condition of material place in need of protection by the concerned efforts of the rest of the world. The master narrative of the past is now accompanied by a scientific discourse including an ecological consciousness and the global interconnectedness of nations and cultures. Antarctica, once the most remote place on earth, is now the site for the development of new representational practices and new modes of exploratory knowledge.

On the whole, there is a sense today that scientists carry the baton of the great explorers of the past. Indeed, Antarctica appears to offer direct access to the past, its ice acting as a kind of archive of past ages, while it also envisages present and future perils (Leane 2012: 155). The contemporary process of creating Antarctica through writing is strongly connected to memorialization, the artificial environments of the continent, even the bodies of the people moving across or temporarily living on ice (Glasberg 2012: 2-3). The modern Antarctic novel is fully aware of such environmental 'ideology', at least since Ursula Le Guin's science fiction work *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) (6). Despite popular perceptions of the Antarctic as a frozen male-only continent, women have followed the footsteps of the heroes of the past. The recent occasions created by women working and living in Antarctica also imply a gendering of the scientific research. On the other hand, any current 'realistic' Antarctic narrative tends to be a travel narrative, portraying journeys of personal growth and renewal. Thus, in *Terra Incognita. Travels in Antarctica* (1996) Sara Wheeler focuses on the people of Antarctica, past and present – the way they live now, the way they lived and died in the past, and how they react to the physical and psychological challenges of the most extreme weather conditions of the world.

The passage of time is the structuring pattern of Beryl Bainbridge's novel *The Birthday Boys* (1991), which deconstructs the myth of the Polar explorers from a postcolonial and feminist perspective, testing and debunking Edwardian

male values. The 'Birthday Boys' of the title are Scott and the four members of his final team, each of whom narrates a section of the story. As the narrative progresses the reader discovers that these figures are not great explorers, but frail and anxious men, terribly suffering from nostalgia, tenderly recalling their mothers and wives (7). If Bainbridge retells and revisits historical events, other narrative texts imagine the future, such as Marie Darieussecq's *White* (2003), where the ghosts of the explorers interact with the fictional characters and continue to narrate their own story (8).

The sense of Antarctica as a place apart also means that it can be considered apart on a temporal scale, while its communities can sustain views of new or different gender roles and societies. In this sense, science fiction provides a peculiar point of view, on the one hand, pointing to an ideal Southern land, on the other, to post-apocalyptic situations. In Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica* (1997), the representation of the continent, although de-exoticised through the writer's emphasis on tourism and scientific investigation, is deeply influenced by the age of explorations. Ecological sustainability is a major theme in *Antarctica*, where a significant part of the action is catalyzed by the threat of invasion and depredation of the near-pristine environment by corporate interests.

In conclusion, Antarctica remains a fascinating and contradictory place, the imperial site of the British cultural imagination as well as the contemporary postcolonial territory governed both by the former imperial nations and by postcolonial countries such as India or New Zealand. If we acknowledge the relevance of a postcolonial approach, prevailing representations of Antarctica rewrite the colonial age of explorations steeped into myth and memory as peculiarly contemporary narrations based on post-imperial values and scientific challenges, mostly related to changing world climate and environmental issues.

NOTES

1. Among the vast bibliography on the Antarctic expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century, a great number of works deal with Scott. See, for example, Preston 1997, Jones 2003, Crane 2005 and Blackhall 2012. On the persistence of Scott and Shackleton's fame, see Barczewski 2007.

2. It is worth mentioning that, in the colonial context, alien space, according to Paul Carter (1987), exists when it is culturally assimilated. The discovery of the new land – Australia in Carter's study, but the same principle functions for Antarctica as well – is the initial moment of cultural formation and generation of the continent.

3. Larson (2011: 294) argues that the British Antarctic expeditions of the pre-war period become modern and forward-looking enterprises. The expeditions conducted significant research that, in fields ranging from climate change and palaeontology to marine biology and glaciology, helped shape the twentieth century view of Antarctica and its place in the global system of nature. Although the focus on heroic manhauling turned Scott into a Victorian stereotype, the British expeditions of the Edwardian age prefigure the current era in Antarctic science.

4. On Scott's changing reputation see Jones 2011 and Jones 2012.

5. Sherrill 2001 emphasizes the process of textual and discursive formation of the North, implying the creation of visual and verbal myths. The extreme South and the extreme North, notwithstanding their geographical and morphological differences, share similar systems of representation.

6. Ursula Le Guin is also the author of "Sur", a short story originally published on the *New Yorker* in 1982, a fictional report, long hidden in an attic, of an all-woman expedition to the South Pole which took place in 1909-10, before Amundsen and Scott. Le Guin's feminist utopia creates an alternative history of Antarctica, though inevitably retracing the history it critiques.

7. On Bainbridge's work see Brazzelli (2009: 41-53).

8. Also in Elizabeth Arthur's *Antarctic Navigation* (1994), Scott remains an icon. All these fictional examples, and many more, are presented and discussed in Leane 2012.

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Post-Imperial Culture and its Melancholies: From Théophile Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* **to Orhan Pamuk's** *Istanbul. Memories of a City*

Abstract I: This article is concerned with literary representations of the affective impact of the Ottoman empire's demise on its principal metropolis, Istanbul. It discusses first the work of nineteenth-century French novelist and diarist Théophile Gautier about the city, *Constantinople of To-day*, then moves on to analyse its subsequent influence on the work of the early Turkish Republican writers, through to Orhan Pamuk's recent memoir *Istanbul. Memories of a City.* In *Istanbul*, Pamuk forges a system of belief that presents itself as a counter-narrative to the ideological discourses that took over the city, as successive Republican governments embarked on radical urban, ethnic and religious reconfigurations of the post-Ottoman metropolis. This is registered in his memoir as an affective structure, a form of melancholy that Pamuk terms *hüzün*, and that may be perceived as operating through the Saidian model of 'intertwined constructions' expressed in his *Culture and Imperialism*. The article proposes that Pamuk's fraught gesture significantly complicates Said's unilateral argument on the French Orientalists in his *Orientalism*, suggesting instead the urgency of reading Gautier's influence on Pamuk through the early Turkish Republican writers as a trope of world literary dynamics.

Abstract II: Questo saggio esplora la ricaduta affettiva della fine dell'impero ottomano sulla sua metropoli principale, Istanbul, così come viene rappresentata per la prima volta nell'opera del diarista francese ottocentesco Théophile Gautier, e poi procede analizzando

l'influenza successiva del monumentale *Constantinople of To-day* di Gautier sull'opera dei primi scrittori repubblicani turchi fino al recente memoir di Orhan Pamuk *Istanbul. Memories of a City.* In *Istanbul*, Pamuk tenta di forgiare un sistema di pensiero che si presenti come contro-narrazione rispetto ai discorsi ideologici che si sono appropriati della città in seguito alla riconfigurazione urbana, etnica e religiosa prodotta dalle politiche della nuova repubblica. Questo sentimento, una forma di malinconia che Pamuk definisce *hüzün*, opera in un certo senso attraverso il modello di Said delle 'costruzioni intrecciate' delineato in *Culture and Imperialism* – il sentimento fortemente intimo e localizzato di Pamuk non è rappresentato come l'eredità non mediata dei primi scrittori post-imperiali, che furono i primi ad esprimerlo in turco. Al contrario, Pamuk individua nell'*hüzün* – così come nella sua stessa concezione di Istanbul – un lascito diretto dei diaristi ottocenteschi francesi e, soprattutto, di Théophile Gautier. L'articolo sostiene che un tale gesto complica significativamente la tesi unilaterale sui diaristi francesi sostenuta da Said in *Orientalism* e promuove, invece, la necessità di leggere l'influenza di Gautier su Pamuk attraverso i primi scrittori repubblicani come indice di dinamiche letterarie mondiali.

In early June of 1852 the French novelist and diarist Théophile Gautier, then forty-one years old, embarked upon a thirteen-day, Istanbul-bound journey across the Mediterranean aboard the mail ship *Leonidas*. The *Leonidas* sailed from the port of Marseilles, past Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, docked at Malta and then travelled towards the Cyclades, on to İzmir (Smyrna) and finally to Istanbul, where Gautier stopped for a lengthy sojourn. Since the beginning of his narrative – the moment Gautier leaves Paris and journeys to Marseilles – his prose assumes a specific posture with respect to what he often indiscriminately terms as 'the

South'. The aura of gentility, the poise of a sophisticated, European-born-and-bred eye, the confident tone and descriptive ease, even the nonchalance – in other words, the mixture of *disinvoltura* and childlike excitement through which he addresses each location the *Leonidas* sails past, each individual or new phenomenon he comes up against, are unmistakable (1).

Gautier's work has, of course, come within Edward W. Said's line of fire, in the latter's *Orientalism*, as a quintessential example of 'Orientalist' literature, alongside most of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century diarists, philologists, travel writers and others who constituted a salient subject and target of Said's critique. Much of the scholarship on Gautier's work has indeed focused upon and amply demonstrated the yearning for experiences of 'Oriental beauty' and 'Arabic sensuality' that had characterized the writer's mindset at least since 1833, when he was in the process of penning his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (2). Indeed, together with friends such as Gérard de Nerval – who influenced him profoundly, Arsène Houssaye, Charles Baudelaire, Barbey D'Aurevilly and several others, Gautier actively nourished a desire for the 'South' and the 'East' construed as exhilarating *loci* of a promising otherness. Within these spaces, Gautier hoped, one could, perhaps more than anywhere else, experience an alternative aesthetic *milieu* to the increasingly industrialized, capital-driven, demographically expansive, utilitarian and American-inflected Europe that, particularly for many bohemian Romantics and other art-driven collectives at the time, had grown unbearably disenchanting. The subjective projection of fantasies about Egypt – his enduring passion – as it emerges in his short fiction *Une nuit de Cléopatre* as well as his *Le Roman de la Momie* and other works, testifies to Gautier's deep-seated yearnings and expectations of the East as an imaginatively salvific space. In conceiving his fictions, Gautier often relied heavily on received knowledge of the regions he was writing about – and his old friend and classmate Gérard de Nerval's influence in this respect was extensive. Upon his own return from Beirut and Cairo, where he had

accumulated the materials for his *Voyage en Orient* (published in 1851), Nerval briefed an enthralled Gautier about the 'wonders' of the Nile river, Beirut, Egypt and its traditions, 'especially with regard to women and marriage' and so forth (Dahab 1999: 2-4).

Edward Said draws attention, of course, to Gautier's heavy reliance on the testimonies received from Nerval, citing as an example the latter's correspondence with Gautier in which he laments his own experience of the Orient, and particularly of Egypt, as a 'betrayed dream' (Said 1994b: 100). Herein lies the first hurdle for any critical reading of Gautier's stance in his travel diary, especially since Said himself speaks in terms of 'the typical experiences and emotions' that accompany the Orientalist mindset, and draws a fairly broad assumption regarding the latter. The Orientalist frame of mind, he argues, is structured and thrives by means of a sense of disenchantment, a disappointment "that the *modern* Orient is not at all like the [received] texts. […] Memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination, sends one back to the imagination as a place preferable, for the European sensibility, to the real Orient" (Said 1994b: 100-101).

While Gautier's imaginative fictions may be more directly vulnerable to Said's critique, his *Constantinople of To-day*, the voluminous diary of his foray across the eastern Mediterranean, betrays a deep-seated mode of perception that may not be so neatly amenable to being read as an Orientalist stereotype. *Prima facie*, of course, *Constantinople of To-day* seems to deliver its fair contribution to the unilateral Orientalist frame of mind critiqued by Said. This article will suggest that, in seeking beyond the fleeting mention of Gautier proffered by Said in his seminal work, one can encounter a disposition that does not restrict itself to convenient fantasies, overtly implausible projections or the unquestioned endorsement of Orientalist precedents. As I shall argue anon, Gautier's travel diary often purports to complicate and even to undermine,

rather than endorse, many of the facile or unilateralist assumptions that Said criticized as pertaining to the ranks of Orientalist textualism.

A Dialectics of Reception

This more relational disposition in Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* makes itself present, in the first place, as a *suturing* quality. It comes to us as a readiness on the diarist's end, a deeply felt inclination to revise the knowledges he inherited from the metropole, by adopting a receptive and assimilative approach to the complex historical and political realities he encountered upon his journey. As will be pointed out in due course, *Constantinople of To-day* displays a certain ability on the diarist's side to discern the historically contingent from the discursively convenient contexts that he was exposed to, and that influenced him especially during his sojourn in Istanbul. This is not to say that a latent Orientalist, metropole-inflected tendency is not present in his text, but rather, that this itself is tempered by the author's own retrospective critique of his psychological state as he experienced the declining Ottoman city. This latter, self-critical approach is more actively attuned to the material urgencies that the author witnesses as he travels into the eastern Mediterranean.

This dialectic, of a latent metropolitan discourse that is *also* profoundly receptive to the material urgencies it encounters is, I believe, what has made Gautier's writing so attractive to Turkey's early Republican intellectuals. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yahya Kemal and others amongst their contemporaries were actively seeking thought structures that would allow them to negotiate their existence at the cusp of Ottoman political and cultural formations that were fast disappearing, and giving way to the pressures of Turkification and Republican nationalism. Gautier's metropolitan sensibility, combined with an attunement, conspicuously on an emotive level, to the fact of Istanbul as a lapsed city that "had ceased to be exotic", was so influential that, as Pamuk himself observes, it

percolated through to the deepest concerns of modern Turkish literature (Pamuk 2005: 214).

What came out of this affinity can be perhaps termed a 'dialectics of reception' that, initiated first by Gautier's openness to the influences of a crumbling Istanbul, was eventually to see the native writers drawing upon the mood documented by Gautier in order to explain their own ontological conditions. The trans-cultural currents at play in this dialectics of reception are intriguing, not least because this form of interaction, this trans-generational flow of mutual influence, practically forecloses the problematic presented by Said's unilateral Orientalism. More pressingly, the dialectics of reception speaks of the urgency brought to attention by the latter in his *Culture and Imperialism,* namely, the need to read the cultural archive contrapuntally, in line with the demands of the "dynamic global environment created by imperialism […]" (Said 1994a: 59). Indeed, the posthumous influence of *Constantinople of To-day* on the experiments in the urban representation of Istanbul carried out by Tanpınar and, eventually, by Pamuk himself, is more effectively approached today "with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 1994a: 59).

The dialectics of reception in *Constantinople of To-day* is often made visible through Gautier's associative sense of observation on his journey, as well as his ability to find and read the qualities of the 'peripheralized' character of his subjects. Inside a cemetery in Smyrna, Gautier remarks, for instance, that here "life is not so carefully separated from death, as with us; but they jostle each other familiarly, like old friends" – and equally layered is his remark, as he sails into the Bosphorus, that "On both sides, Life has Death immediately in its rear; and each town encircles itself with a suburb of tombs" (Gautier 1854: 59, 350). Such observations may not be registered simply as markers of a bizarre difference, or as some radical form of otherness that strikes the traveller's fancy

because it jars with his urbane European breeding. Gautier's words resonate, rather, with the sense of affective dejection that the progressive demise of the old Ottoman order and other governing structures in the south-eastern Mediterranean provoked in him.

As these *anciens régimes* succumbed to the ravages of Great Power expansionism, with its "brutal imposition of 'the logic of unilateral capital'", Gautier's account tends to 'exploit' the aesthetic returns of this sea-change in power relations in the region (Lazarus 2011: 2). Already, as he tours the Church of St. John in Valletta – the temple of the Knights Hospitaller who were overthrown by Napoleon half a century before – Gautier refers to "a sentiment of melancholy" that overtook him in

> the city of La Valette; that stronghold of the knights of the Order of St. John, who have played so bold and brilliant a part in history, but who have passed away, like all ancient institutions when they have no longer an object; and of whom there now remains, only the memory of former glories (Gautier 1854: 36, 41).

This sentiment shapes the psychological chasm that opens up in the European author's vista, as the awareness of an immense memorial legacy that is on its way out impacts upon his senses. The dialectics of reception is born of such an impact: Gautier's terse résumé of the Hospitallers' fate is reminiscent of his corresponding views of a crumbling Ottoman empire, a deep historical decline that stirs in its observer "a gentle and pleasing sadness, which is not without its charm" (Gautier 1854: 59). In other words, Gautier's subjective response to the sense of historical peripheralization he observes taking place around him is a sense of melancholy that is at once requisite *and* irrepressible, since it endows the regional locations he visits with a unique affect, an agency that emanates from its very aesthetics of dejection.

As knowledge and event, present and past, consciousness and contingency coincide within Gautier's ruined landscapes, the structuring affect that obtains in his diary would be "derived from the objective status of the cognized world [and] conversely, the cognized world is at once objectively present and also synthesized under the sign of infinite sadness" (Pensky 1993: 21). Gautier experiences this 'sign of infinite sadness', this perverse epiphany, this melancholic dialectic, more poignantly than anywhere else as he stands in front of the crumbling Ottoman and Byzantine fortifications in the *chora*, in the outlying stretches of land outside Istanbul's ancient, dilapidated walls:

> On every side, decay, dilapidation, and neglect; and above all this squalor and abandonment, the pure, dazzling, implacable sunlight of the Orient, making even more painfully obvious every minute detail of the wretchedness around. […] from the exterior gallery of the minaret of the neighbouring mosque, two muezzins, clad in white, and moving around the gallery with the step of phantoms, proclaimed the sacramental formula of Islam to these mansions, deserted, blind and deaf, and losing themselves in silence and solitude. […] I felt myself, in my own despite, oppressed by an overwhelming sadness […] (Gautier 1854: 223-224).

For the diarist this moment turns out to be, perhaps, the crucial Benjaminian *Jetztzeit* of his entire journey: as he faces the ruins, Gautier experiences the haunting injunction of a destitute history upon its visitor. The ruins constitute the space where what Gautier referred to, earlier in his diary, as the "vague cosmographies of the imagination" (Gautier 1854: 10), the projections of the Orientalist mindset, encounter their tempering "objective status of the cognized world" (Pensky 1993: 21).

The unrequited fall of the ruin, of the lapsed object of history, calls out in turn to the historicist sensibility. The effect of this injunction on the European visitor is that of an 'overwhelming sadness'. It is a paralytic sense of dejection

that Gautier asserts with sincerity, but which does not, however, merely obtain as a mark of helplessness. On the contrary, Gautier perceives it as an intimate form of dejection that expresses itself, that is exteriorized, catalyzed by the 'implacable sunlight of the Orient' itself. As the vaunted Orientalist posture of *disinvoltura* breaks down, as the ruins – the repressed debris of Occidental modernity – come to haunt and paralyse the diarist's present, Gautier draws on the resources of melancholy itself, on the historical urgencies it demonstrates to him, to endow the Istanbullu ruins with a sense of spiritual intensity. The image of the phantasmic muezzins announcing their formula to the 'deserted, blind and deaf' districts, the fluid *denouement* of loss 'in silence and solitude', already gesture to the advent of a culture of belief that is no longer Islamic and certainly not Christian: here, the observant diarist is unwittingly articulating what would come to be termed, as it were, a 'proto-secular' mode of cultural perception.

Gautier's encounter with the Istanbullu ruins is all the more eventful, since, as stated briefly earlier, it has set in motion a cultural intertext which was already visible in post-Ottoman and early Republican Turkish writing, and continues to resonate in the vernacular literature today. A salient effect of the picturesque ruins on Gautier was the knowledge that there, in ancient Constantinople's outlying districts, the *flâneur* abroad could uniquely "recover the hidden dependency of Occidental modernity on what remains in the dark, over the frontier in the silenced territories of alterity" (Chambers 2008: 108). The sense of overwhelming – but also eloquent – dejection that emanates from this recovery of the Occident's dependency on the debris of its emergence overtakes and captivates Gautier. This melancholy speaks of an Orientalist's frustrated effort at self-fulfilment. His frustration is partly the result of his direct encounters with the remainders of imperial grandeur, through which "it becomes evident that the finally found real object is not the reference of desire, even though it possesses all the required properties" (Žižek 2008: 131).

This apprehension, in and of itself, exacerbates Gautier's paralyzing sense of dejection. In his account of Istanbul, however, this experience of an intense melancholy is not conveniently transferred onto the projection of some imaginary conceit reminiscent of the Orientalist accounts critiqued by Said. Gautier's melancholy is particular in that it manifests itself as a form of *objet a*, or what Slavoj Žižek would term, in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, the "real-impossible correlative" of that otherwise rigid designator that, in Gautier's case, is the Orientalist *forma mentis* inherited from Nerval *et al.* (Žižek 2008: 95). The Istanbullu ruins inexorably face the diarist – and the diary itself – with the spuriousness of their very inscription. The diary registers itself as the ruin of an event – an encounter with material, cultural ruin that has 'sobered' the author up, showed his desire for self-mythification, as it were, to be impossible. It is this structure of melancholy, at once eloquent and mute, aesthetically rewarding but discursively frustrating, that has lent itself to the efforts of both early and latter-day Turkish republican writers who, "lacking Turkish precedents, [...] followed the footsteps of Western travellers" in their subsequent representations of Istanbul (Pamuk 2005: 99-103).

The countless depictions of the city provided in *Constantinople of To-day* adopt a narrative technique that would become a hallmark strategy for subsequent representations of the Ottoman city – Gautier's distinct descriptive realism. Despite its frequent indulgences in hyperbole, his account provides a detailed and eloquent urban depiction of a culturally, politically and economically affluent civilizational hub that for four hundred years of governance under the sign of Islam had encouraged very little in terms of figurative (self-) representation. Gautier simply translates the melancholy, the crippling-enabling affect created in him by the picturesque ruins *in* and *as* a descriptive narrative of urban space: at once an aesthetically eloquent landscape *and* a tangible reminder of the now unattainable heights of material and cultural influence known to the Ottoman *ancien régime* that built it.

For the writers of the early Republican Turkey who also lived through the final years of Ottoman rule, the sense of an abysmal decline was everywhere visible in the then ongoing Republican mutilations of historical Istanbul itself – most notably the obliteration of valuable aspects of the city's architectural Ottoman legacy and the relentless persecution of its Greek, Jewish, Armenian and other minorities. Throughout this interregnum, which saw the rise and consolidation of the Atatürkian state, the "melancholy of the ruins" as a mode of expressing the ennui of loss and peripheralization became a motif of choice, a salient marker of the early Republican literature's quest for a renewed cultural and political assertiveness in the face of Istanbul's historic fate. The adoption of the city's picturesque fall, the potentials of its visual and visible melancholy as at once a paralytic and an enabling mode of identification, was something that the early Republican writers discovered in the writing of Gautier.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, whose representations of Istanbul in *Huzur* (*A Mind at Peace*), his *magnum opus* are perhaps the most fluent portrayals of post-Ottoman melancholy we now have, was very directly influenced by Gautier's own experience. As Pamuk insists, "[Tanpınar,] the Istanbul writer most alert to the changes wrought by the 'vast light show' that is the Istanbul landscape, acquired his vocabulary and his eye for detail from Gautier. Gautier had the sort of eye that could find melancholic beauty amid dirt and disorder. He shared the excitement of romantic literature for Greek and Roman ruins and the remains of vanished civilizations, and also, even as he mocked it, the awe" (Pamuk 2005: 205). Tanpınar's writing reworks Gautier's 'overwhelming sadness' at the sight of an Istanbul at the mercy of Western political, cultural and economic interests, and registers it as an obsessive deployment of ruin-imagery. This is suggested in the poignant opening of Tanpınar's epic novel on post-Ottoman Istanbul:

> Ihsan had complained of backaches, fever, and fatigue for about two days before pneumonia heralded its onset, sudden and sublime, establishing a sultanate over the household, a psychology of devastation through fear,

> dread, rue, and endless goodwill scarcely absent from lips or glances […] the
> children languished in ruin (Tanpinar 2008: 9).

The republicanized, post-Ottoman city's ailments are personified through its inhabitants, whose structuring emotion is now the 'psychology of devastation' that has established its own 'sultanate', one that rules through 'fear, dread, rue' under the benevolent guise of 'endless goodwill'. Tanpınar often depicts the effects of historical trauma on the city's impoverished worker populations in the same tones of sheer abjection outlined by Gautier, using the ruins as his salient image. "The woman's face was a veritable building on the verge of collapse", Tanpınar observes at one point (Tanpinar 2008: 21). In another example, Mümtaz, a central character in the novel, "plod[s] through decrepit, grim neighbourhoods, passing before aged houses whose bleakness gave them the semblance of human faces" (Tanpinar 2008: 23).

In Tanpınar's novel, the allegorical protagonist and his melancholy emerge as a result of a personal, 'atavistic' awareness of the city's ruined past. The history of Istanbul begins to manifest itself physically, by means of the ruin-images that in turn construct and dismantle the protagonist's affective schema. This is a direct bequeathal of Gautier. Tanpınar's melancholy-bound Mümtazexists in the twilight zones between life and death, the past and the present, fear and anamnesia – a liminal condition symbolized by the imagery of ruins that shapes his surroundings:

> Mümtaz liked to spend the twilight hours perched on boulders between
> the road and the sea. The sun above the Bey Mountains girded the hilly
> undulations in golden and silver armor as if arranging the rites of its death
> and preparing a sarcophagus from its own gilding and indigo shadows;
> […] The boulders, during the daytime, were only seaweed-covered blocks
> of stone that wind and rain had eroded with holes like sponges […]
> Mümtaz tried not to be scattered by that astounding gust of

apprehension whose origins extended deeply into the past and whorled about his entire being (Tanpinar 2008: 34).

This is a melancholy which emanates from the increasingly distorted social and urban landscape of the city: Gautier's melancholia, represented as an erosion of the spirit, interpellates the Istanbullu one in the same way as the landscape itself crushes Mümtaz's spirit: a mood, therefore, that engulfs and determines the 'entire being' of the post-imperial Istanbullu subject. By associating the city's cultural and social impoverishment with its ruined or 'eroded' landscape after reading the French Orientalists, the Istanbullu writers were able to reconfigure the resulting ennui, and to present it anew as the city's own *leitmotif.* "Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar created an image of the city that resonated for Istanbullus", Pamuk writes, "something they could do only by merging those beautiful views with the poverty 'in the wings' invoked by Gautier" (Pamuk 2005: 201).

The ambivalent identification of a crippling-enabling melancholia, elaborated by Tanpınar in the wake of Gautier, is reinforced in Orhan Pamuk's own memoir, *Istanbul – Memories of a City.* Pamuk's work spells out the paradoxical sentiments evoked by a post-imperial melancholic mood that Pamuk terms *hüzün.* One of his many and varied definitions of this affective structure is revealing of the continuing legacy of Gautier, and the latter's perception of old Istanbul as an inevitable marker of the contemporary South, or one of modernity's many surplus locations:

To feel this *hüzün* is to be able to see the moments and places in which this feeling and the context that arouses this feeling mix together [...] what I am trying to describe now is not the melancholy of Istanbul, but the *hüzün* in which we see ourselves reflected, the *hüzün* we absorb with pride and share as a community [...] the same grief that no one can or would wish to escape, an ache that finally saves our souls and also gives them depth. [...]

> So it is, too, for the residents of Istanbul as they resign themselves to poverty and depression […] but it also explains why it is their choice to embrace failure, indecision, defeat and poverty so philosophically and with such pride, suggesting that *hüzün* is not the outcome of life's worries and great losses, but their principal cause. […] *Hüzün* does not just paralyze the inhabitants of Istanbul; it also gives them poetic licence to be paralyzed (Pamuk 2005: 84, 88, 93-94).

This form of melancholy owes its beginnings to Gautier's observations in his *Constantinople of To-day*. Like its eponymous city, Pamuk's *Istanbul*, seen through this perspective of post-imperial *tristesse*, does not lend itself easily to any projection of it as an oppositional space evolving against some notion of the 'West' as a historical *idée fixe*. For, as it plumbs the unrequited layers of the city's past, Pamuk's memoir works on the indeterminate premise of "what it feels like to live in the psychological gulf that opens at the end of an era" (Hughes 1997: x). Pamuk's consciousness of his city's *mise en abyme* in the course of the twentieth century is a self-consciously 'writerly' account that addresses, in large part, the question of – and the quest for – a post-imperial Istanbullu identity. As will soon be pointed out, the memoir incorporates several other intertexts that help the memoirist trace a certain urban literary imaginary that arose as a consequence of the city's peripheralization over the past hundred and fifty years, since Gautier's own visit. It is this imaginary, Pamuk argues, that has to an important extent shaped the understanding of Istanbullu modernity *as* and *through* a series of "structuring engagements" with Western forms (Casanova 2005: 79).

Entering the 'World Space'

Modern Turkey's earliest generation of Republican writers may be regarded as Pamuk's own literary predecessors insofar as they reconfigured a modern Istanbullu identity around the embryonic notion of *hüzün* – a notion they

gleaned from the nineteenth-century diarists and writers of the period as well as their own individual observations. The ideals promulgated by the writers of the early Turkish Republic had a very direct influence on how Istanbul's residents perceived their own geographic and political identity in the subsequent years. Pamuk, in fact, notes that the writing of exponents such as Yahya Kemal, Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Reşat Ekrem Koçu acquired its sense of purpose in large part through exploring the "tensions between the past and the present […]" (Pamuk 2005: 99-103). "It was from Théophile Gautier, another author greatly admired by Yahya Kemal, that Tanpınar learned how to put a landscape into words", Pamuk observes, and he further indicates that, lacking as they were in Turkish literary precedents, "they followed the footsteps of Western travellers, wandering around the ruins of the city's poor neighbourhoods […]" (Pamuk 2005: 99-103). The perception that most Istanbullu residents entertain about their city, Pamuk insists, "depends very much on the images these writers created", and the latter constructed and re-presented the city's melancholic essence, in turn, "by seeing Istanbul through the eyes of a Westerner" (99-103).

The early Republican writers succeeded in fashioning their 'poetics of the past', of which *Istanbul* purports to be a latter-day exponent, as a result of two main affective influences. Their melancholic engagement with the ruin-space as a basic identitarian practice simultaneously hinged on the city's post-imperial peripheralization *and* assumed the French writers' own versions of 'melancholy' as its point of departure. Pamuk is here referring to the process of a profound, lengthy and trans-generational literary "interference" (Moretti 2000), a cross-narrative conversation between vastly differing cultural *milieux*. This process may be more adequately understood in terms of Pascale Casanova's notion of a 'world literary space' as well as Franco Moretti's 'world literary' dispensation. Kemal and Tanpınar, in Pamuk's view, forged their melancholic vision of the post-imperial city only after taking issue with the highly individual formulations of

melancholy that writers hailing from the centres of global literature wrote as they experienced Istanbul (Casanova 2005: 74).

Kemal, and particularly Tanpınar, incorporated and conversed with these Western formulations of melancholy within their own texts. As Casanova has pointed out, the notion of a 'world literature' constitutes a proper cultural mediation that may exist in parallel with the political sphere while being relatively autonomous from it. Pamuk is, I believe, referring to this phenomenon when he associates the writers from the early Turkish Republic with the nineteenth-century French diarists. Within this space "struggles of all sorts – political, social, national, gender, ethnic – come to be refracted, diluted, deformed and transformed according to a literary logic, and in literary forms" (Pamuk 2005: 72). The 'worldly' context of such a space becomes visible, Casanova insists, through the structural inequalities within the literary world itself which give rise to specific struggles, both over literature itself and its place in the local and global circuits of transmission and reception, within and beyond national borders. The Istanbullu writers' urban poetics participates in this agonistic world structure: Kemal, Tanpınar and Pamuk himself establish, in their work, a very intimate affinity with Richard Burton, Gérard de Nerval and Théophile Gautier – three of the more heavily critiqued figures in Said's *Orientalism*.

According to Moretti, this interstitial literary space would house the problematic interconnection of literary forms in a relation of what he terms 'foreign debt' – a literary transaction wherein one literary work evolves precisely through the interference within it of another, 'alien' aesthetic mode. Literary interference, Moretti argues, is often asymmetrical and unequal. "A target literature is, more often than not, interfered with by a source literature which completely ignores it", he notes (Moretti 2000: 56). The law of literary evolution in cultures belonging to the "semi-periphery" of the world space arises, according to him, from "a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French

or English) and local materials" (Moretti 2000: 58). These writers' creation of an aesthetic identity for the city at the height of its historical peripheralization operates precisely at this mediating fault line: modern Istanbullu identity was born, Pamuk shows, as the amalgam of an imported literary-affective model – Orientalist melancholia – and its reconfiguration by the Istanbullu writers into autonomous local variations. Both Gautier's *Constantinople* as well as Burton's mammoth work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* were basic sources for the "foreign debt" that then interpellated the early Republicans' formulation of Istanbul's aesthetic modernity. The inherent ambivalences of Pamuk's *hüzün* itself – its paralyzing ennui and salvific beauty – are already present in Gautier's impressions, a century and a half earlier: the sense of failure that both co-exists with and gives rise to one's self-expression, the ambience of decay evinced and transformed by an implacable sunlight.

The awareness of this 'foreign debt' to Gautier and his contemporaries is precisely what Pamuk means when he states that "the roots of our *hüzün* are European" (Pamuk 2005: 210). *Hüzün* is conceived as an affective palimpsest that is Benjaminian in nature: it emanates from the constellation of unrequited pasts (Gautier's "same grief that no one can or would wish to escape") that survive in order to crowd the present with their disturbing significance. Like Gautier's own melancholy, Pamuk's *hüzün* seeks amid the city's dilapidated locations a paradigm for a spiritual intensity gleaned from the amnestic devastation of Western modernity and the advent of aggressive capital.

As such, it follows the model initiated by Gautier, inferring quotidian forms of identification from the psychological wastelands of history. This sentiment is further complicated by Pamuk when he confesses that

> this is why I sometimes read Westerners' accounts not at arm's length, as someone else's exotic dreams, but drawn close by, as if they were my own memories. [...] To see Istanbul through the eyes of a foreigner always gives me pleasure, in no small part because the picture helps me

fend off narrow nationalism and pressures to conform" (Pamuk 2005: 214-218).

Pamuk's intimate disclosure here testifies not simply to his own need to estrange himself from his birthplace, but also to the notion that the signifier "Istanbul" is far wealthier than its conventional, stereotypical designation as the nexus between East and West suggests. The city becomes a mode of representation in and of itself, constantly seeking self-renewal through that radical form of alterity that was already, a century and a half ago, echoed by the French diarist as he sailed into its waterway: "The Bosphorus is full of currents, the direction of which varies greatly […]" (Gautier 1854: 352).

Pamuk perceives his own writerly legacy, therefore, as pertaining to an aesthetic order that permits one to transcend the nationalist parameters that restrained Istanbul during the rise of the Republic and, in many ways, to this very day. This is a view that partakes, therefore, of that distinct literary *limen* that is the 'world space'. Any literary text's positioning today will invariably be doubly defined: one is situated once "according to the position he or she occupies in a national space, and then once again according to the place that [one] occupies within the world space" (Casanova 2005: 81). But Moretti has taken this tenet a critical step further. The product of cultural history, he argues, is always a composite one. But which is the dominant mechanism in its composition? "The internal, or the external one? The nation or the world?" (Moretti 2000: 68). In the case of *Istanbul*, it can be inferred that, insofar as he is concerned with the constraints of the nation-state model on the otherwise diverse identifications inside his native city, the memoirist's responsibility is to display Istanbul's present as a direct result of communal pasts which tended to recognize the co-existence of creeds and ethnicities, thereby invalidating the Turkish nationalist claims over the city.

Pamuk's native consciousness as an Istanbullu – and his repeatedly acknowledged inheritance from Gautier and his contemporaries – is often

concerned with undermining exclusivist or monocultural claims to his native space. He achieves this by unsettling stereotypical perceptions of Istanbul to the degree of inducing a certain *ostranenie*, a scathing defamiliarization of Istanbullu spaces, by juxtaposing its strange – because intentionally obscured – pasts to the narrative present. In achieving this unsettling effect, the works of European travellers and artists themselves serve Pamuk as important memorial substitutes that can shelter the Istanbullu writer's own imaginary from state-manufactured amnesia. This fact in itself constitutes one important reason for why Pamuk's work is so indispensable today to the echelons of world literature.

In Pamuk's earlier novel *My Name is Red*, the origins of Ottoman miniaturist art are traced back to Isfahan, Tabriz and the Far East. Its future, on the other hand, is inextricably bound to the developments in Frankish portraiture and perspectival painting. This planetary consciousness achieves an almost solipsistic dimension in *Istanbul,* where the memoirist finds his own voice and his critical stance towards his native space precisely by hosting other memories coming from beyond his national borders. In one sense, *Istanbul* is about a sustained cosmo*politics* of narrative habitations – it is a text which reconstructs the Istanbullu social space by perceiving others' written experiences of it as anything but foreign, and thereby inhabiting them as one's own, across the strictures of time and place.

In this manner, Gautier's memoirs open up the possibility for Pamuk to transcend the cultural depthlessness of the present and direct his critical gaze to the narratives concealed behind the threefold veil of Westernization, nationalization and capital. It becomes possible for Pamuk, therefore, to inhabit his native city – insofar as this residence entails the *a priori* hosting of other aesthetic visions as essential components in the cultural constellation that shapes his Istanbul. The memoirist's sensibility operates in the knowledge that hosting other narratives within one's space, as one's own, may not be reducible to one sporadic literary gesture among others, but becomes a vital attribute of

local culture itself and a direct intervention onto the world-space. "Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*", Jacques Derrida has written, "that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality* [...]" (Derrida 2001: 17). It is such an ethos that leads Pamuk to trace the origins of *hüzün* to Gautier's melancholic form as a structuring theme across the gamut of universal human experience.

A final question to be raised here, having traced some literary-historical aspects of modern Istanbul's cultural melancholia, is whether the *hüzün* invoked by Pamuk could itself be considered in any way, to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept, as a 'provincialization' of the nineteenth-century Orientalist derivations of melancholy. One of the more understated implications in Pamuk's own memoir is that, in the process of acquiring their 'foreign debt' from the French diarists, the early Republican Istanbullu writers found the latters' notions of melancholy to be "at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping [them] to think through the experiences of modernity", thereby compelling them to explore aesthetic alternatives through which that form may be 'renewed from and for the margins' as an alternative social aesthetic in the Republican era (Chakrabarty 2000: 16).

In tracing the literary origins of *hüzün*, Pamuk is trying to demonstrate that the French Orientalists' relation to Istanbul, as well as their unwitting participation in the Istanbullu writers' own imagination of their city, was perhaps more complex than *Orientalism,* with its founding premise of largely unilateral projections of the 'Oriental other', makes it out to be. Standing on Casanova's 'dominated' side of the relation, these writers' representations of Istanbul wove freely, in and out of the French travellers' impressions of the city during the Empire's last decades. Pamuk's memoir itself owes as much to the French diarists as it does to the Istanbullu writers of the early Republic, if not more, precisely because the French documentations offer a more comprehensive, visual and

detailed account of the late Ottoman city than any early Republican Turkish writer could have in fact provided. Moreover, Pamuk's assertion that the roots of the city's *hüzün* are European – his tracing of the city's representation of its most subjective affect, its enabling abjection, to the work of the French diarists – remains at once a most auspicious endorsement of Orientalist literature *and* its severest indictment. Even as Gautier is hailed as one of the city's quintessential *archon*, a literary 'custodian' of the city's melancholic identification, his work today continues to be simultaneously recognized as an agent of the Western ideological apparatus that, in large part, precipitated the city's historic – and melancholic – decline.

For the four centuries of Ottoman governance in the name of Islam, aesthetic representation in and of Istanbul did not actively seek to focus on figurative representation or self-representation. The sparseness of local representations of the city's fate also arose, however, because the one hundred and fifty years that elapsed between Gautier and Pamuk contained the destruction of a more heterogeneous community than Pamuk could ever remember. This included the many artists and intellectuals whose portrayals of late Ottoman Istanbul were either destroyed or actively inhibited. Pamuk's own depiction of the city itself ultimately pertains to the 'world literary space' by virtue of his own incorporation of Gautier's text within it. The memoirist regards Gautier's *Constantinople of To-day* both as a subjective historical account to be regarded with a critical eye but also, crucially, as a unique anamnestic device that survived through an epoch marked by memorial haemorrhage. He argues that, with the new concept of Turkishness that was being cultivated with the demise of Ottoman power, what came into being was, effectively, "a certain *cordon sanitaire* from the rest of the world. It was an end to the great polyglot, multicultural Istanbul of the imperial age; the city stagnated [...]" (Pamuk 2005: 214). Within this context, Pamuk confesses that "I sometimes read Westerners' accounts not at arm's length, as someone else's exotic dreams, but drawn close

by, as if they were my own memories" (Pamuk 2005: 216-217). Pamuk's own judgment is uncompromising in this regard – a vivid, real, realist depiction of Istanbul's intertwined cityscapes is, according to him, "something that only literature can convey" and for many centuries, he scathingly remarks, "the only literature our city inspired was penned by Westerners" (Pamuk 2005: 216).

NOTES

1. Even as he draws nearer to the regions of southern France, Gautier impatiently exclaims that 'The South declares itself already, by a bright sunshine, which warms the flagstones, or sets a-chirping the hundreds of exotic birds […]' (Gautier 1854: 11).

2. See for quotations and a more detailed argument and information on the data presented throughout this paragraph, F. Elizabeth Dahab, Théophile Gautier and the Orient', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 1.4 (1999).

3. The Turkish word *huzur* translates literally as 'peace'. See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace* (2008).

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Chattering Classes/Twittering Revolutionaries: Social Media and the Arab Spring

Abstract I: In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said discusses internationality and cosmopolitanism against the backdrop of the Gulf War, and Rée's view that the "nation-form is a kind of false consciousness", as if it were "an expression of popular subjective will" (Said, 1993: 10). But the monopolization of power by central national authorities results in a kind of façade, whereby "processes which are actually the *effect of internationality* are experienced as an expression of the *natures of different nations* and their individual members" (Said, 1993: 10, emphasis added). Yet nationalism sits uncomfortably in countries that, some might say, were in some cases artificial by-products of colonialism and social media are, arguably, providing broad access to a reclamation of citizen agency and self-determination.

Abstract II: In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said analizza internazionalità e cosmopolitismo sullo sfondodella Guerra del Golfo e dell'opinione di Rée secondo cui la "nation-form is a kind of false consciousness", come se questa fosse "an expression of popular subjective will" (Said, 1993: 10). Ma il monopolio del potere da parte di autorità nazionali centrali produce rappresentazioni in cui "processes which are actually the *effect of internationality* are experienced as an expression of the *natures of different nations* and their individual members" (Said, 1993: 10, mio corsivo). Tuttavia il nazionalismo è problematico nei paesi che furono, per così dire, prodotti artificialmente dal colonialismo, e i social media stanno verosimilmente fornendo largo accesso ad una riappropriazione dell'intervento civile e dell'auto-determinazione.

> If you can take pictures, take pictures…if you can use Twitter, send tweets
> … if you can blog, blog from the street. There are people demonstrating for our
> cause in Tunisia and Jordan, and I just found out that there are people
> demonstrating in Paris too. All of these people have faith in us
> (Nawara Negm, qtd. in Eltantawy & Wiest 1214).

In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said alludes to Jonathan Rée's discussion of internationality and Tim Brennan's of cosmopolitanism and sets them against the backdrop of the Gulf War. Rée notes that nationhood is a device that "cajoles us into participating in global systems of antagonism and tells us that we are only expressing ourselves when we do so" whereas "the task of a history of internationality should be the exposure of this delusion" (Rée 1992: 11). He writes that "the logic of internationality precedes the formation of nations" because "in the same way that individual texts can function only within a field of general intertextuality, so individual nations arise only within a field of general internationality" (Rée 1992: 9). For those who agree with Rée, the "nation-form is a kind of false consciousness", a faux "expression of popular subjective will" (Rée 1992: 10). The consequent monopolization of power by national authorities hides behind a façade, whereby "processes which are actually the *effect of internationality* are experienced as an expression of the *natures of different nations* and their individual members" (Rée 1992: 10, emphasis added). The comfort of "patriotism" and affiliation with the nation equates, then, to a militarism posing as "an expression of natural and prepolitical popular feeling" (Rée 1992: 10).

In a world subsequent to the historic extension of European nations into colonies that, following independence, now must reclaim some sense of antecedent nativist pride, is there a 'nation' to replace the western artifice, or are these postcolonial entities equally enslaved to the faux tribal identities that

politicians constantly reinforce with calls to this or that allegiance or patriotism? In the West, calls for the retrieval of the caliphate (and is this an example of internationalism or a borderless nationalism?) that many interpreted as the motivation for the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York are regularly looked upon with not only suspicion, but also derision, fear, disbelief, and pity (1). This was true before the attack in 2001 (and the less successful one of 1993), and as recently as 2013 with the concerns about the composition of the opposition against Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Romantic yearning for a resurgence of the glory days of yesteryear's caliphate, however ridiculous it may be in today's world, seems to instantiate a post-national view of commonality that cuts across the narrower borders of the nation-state – and brings with it a threat to the extant Arab nations. Now no longer a Saudi Arabia and an Indonesia, but one multi-ethnic Islamic nation, the imagined caliphate is arguably its own false consciousness, another nation-state that has gobbled up its children as any empire of the past has done.

In any case, despite paranoia from some quarters, a majority of those at the barricades is not seeking such a cross-border caliphate, and instead seeks a more broadly representative version of the nation-state with which they identify. They seek states that will now be more responsive, more democratically framed, etc. Internationality as a type of strategic essentialism (we in Tunisia have much in common with you in Lebanon, etc.) encourages the Arab Spring (2) as an expression of an identity that is too simply equated with Islam (as in Egypt, where Christians were in the majority until the mid-10th century, and still make up 10% of the population), and uses the master's tools against the master's 'products', the faux patriotism that keeps autocrats in power. But internationality ultimately frustrates the new individual expression of identity as the participants in these local movements use the tools of globalization and find the clarity of their national identity compromised by characteristics of social media beyond local control.

Global communications and the tools of social media provide the milieu in which this resurgence of agency throughout the Arab world has become conceivable in ways that have surprised much of the world. The ready-to-hand iphone is apparently much more available than the computers that heretofore had been a prerequisite for access to the internet; there has been a steady burgeoning of applications that facilitate transgression of authoritarian national-statist controls; there continues to be a consequent presentation of self through the tropes embedded in facebook and twitter; these technologies result in rising generationally-confrontational expectations of gender-free communications and broad transgression of social classifications. One might say that the tools of 'cyberactivism' provide a catalyst for new discourse communities.

In a 2011 article in *The Journal of Democracy*, Philip Howard and Muzammil Hussain detail how the process evolved, and they conclude that

> The first days of protest in each country were organized by a core group of literate, middle-class young people who had no particular affinities with any existing political parties or any ideologies stressing class struggle, religious fundamentalism, or pan-Arab nationalism. This communication, moreover, itself had a strong distributed or lateral character and did not consist of one or a few relatively simple ideological messages beamed by an elite at a less-educated mass public, but had more the character of a many-sided conversation among more or less equal individuals (Howard & Hussain 2011: 48).

Nahed Eltantawy and Julie B. Wiest, in fact, have used the occasion of the use of social media in Egypt to call for a reconsideration of resource mobilization theory, noting that social media "introduced speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes", and "enabled domestic and international Egyptian activists to follow events in Egypt, join social-networking groups, and

engage in discussions" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1213). Eltantawy and Wiest argue that these technologies are effective in "promoting a sense of community and collective identity among marginalized group members, creating less-confined political spaces, establishing connections with other social movements, and publicizing causes to gain support from the global community" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1207). They note that this had been especially helpful in fostering communication among Islamic women (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1208; see also Khamis 2012).

In rehearsing the recent history of the Arab Spring and the evolving use of social media, Eltantawy and Wiest record milestones in its impact on social activism:

- the formation of the Facebook group called "We are all Khalid Said" in the summer of 2010, referring to the young man brutally beaten to death by Egyptian police;
- Mohamed El Baradei's Facebook and twitter accounts, and the pro-Baradei Facebook pages started by the National Association for Change;
- Omar Afifi's YouTube videos on how to conduct an Egyptian revolution while evading the police (he was a former police officer before moving to Virginia for his own safety, once he wrote such material);
- Egyptian female activist Nawara Negm's video message on 17 January 2011 offering encouragement to the Tunisians and four days later (the epitaph for this essay) posting a YouTube video of a young activist and pointing out how ordinary the act of protest could be in Egyptian society, once people got over their intimidation by a police state (3).

This sort of encouragement (incitement, the government would call it), coupled with "guidance on everything from using technology to escape government surveillance to facing rubber bullets and setting up barricades" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1213) fed the movement as it educated its potential participants.

The same was going on in Tunisia, where protesters on social media "advised their Egyptian counterparts to protest at nighttime for safety, to avoid suicide operations, to use media to convey their message for outside pressure, to spray-paint security forces' armored vehicles black to cover the windshield, and to wash their faces with Coca-Cola to reduce the impact of tear gas" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1215). The researchers make the point that social media allowed common individuals to become "citizen journalists" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1215) and in the process circumvent restrictions that, in earlier protests, had effectively stifled international alerts and evidence of the atrocities being committed. During the earlier uprising when the Mubarak regime cut off internet and cellular phones, activists quickly adapted and used Facebook, etc., to continue getting their message out to the world. The immediacy of the transfer of knowledge, and its broader audience, made this a startling new tool and offered a suggestion of a possible realignment of power – but only up to a point, as the army subsequently demonstrated in overthrowing Morsi and outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood.

If we might recur to Edward Said's discussion of internationality, the apparently sudden coordination of a more democratic communication infrasystem demonstrates a liberatory identity politics for its participants and for those outside their nations whom they drew into their circle. Eltantawy and Wiest suggest that "Written messages and images circulating on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs appeared to strengthen the collective identity of Egyptians worldwide", as did "the Facebook-organized February 1 event inviting users to a virtual 'March of Millions' in solidarity with Egyptian protesters" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011: 1217).

The focus for Eltantawy and Wiest is on aspects of the Arab Spring, but they point out that the germination of cyberactivism was seen in the 1999 World Trade Organization protest in Seattle, and in the creation of the World Social Forum and its activities in Brazil in 2003 and Mumbai in 2004 (4). Thus, as a movement, it inherently calls internationalism into play, whether or not it consciously works against the enlightenment notion of the nation-state to promote some post-statist society – however creatively that might be envisioned by some younger members of the societies in question. While noting that the Arab Spring was the most impressively widespread use of social media for a new kind of revolution, Rita Safranek cites other impressive examples: Moldova in 2009, the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada in January 2011. These suggest that giving publicity to governmental actions can help transform local politics. But she also notes the failures, such as Belarus in March of 2006, the June 2009 uprising of the Green Movement in Iran, the Red Shirt uprising in Thailand in 2010 – these last two were violently suppressed following a broad use of social media in support of the protests. Safranek concludes that "social media has limited impact at best on an important factor affecting nascent revolutions – a regime's willingness to use force to squelch protests": the Egyptian army did not turn against the citizens and protests consequently grew; the Iranian army, on the other hand, turned against its citizens and protests "petered out" (Safranek 2012: 11) (5). So, the rather depressing conclusion seems to be that the success of the new social media remains largely dependent upon whether or not the aims of the protest coincide with those of the wielders of traditional power. One looks in awe at the overthrow of Mubarak; some months later one looks back and wonders if his surrogates ever actually lost control. Nonetheless, the public display of personal involvement in politics was internationally impressive and promises the establishment of new power centers in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world.

Virtual transgression of borders supplements actual migration in the transformation of contemporary states. As Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*, "it is not only tired, harassed, and dispossessed refugees who cross borders and try to become acculturated in new environments; it is also the whole gigantic system of the mass media that is ubiquitous, slipping by most barriers and settling in nearly everywhere" (Said 1993: 374). That was certainly true in 1993, and one sees now the increasingly resonant relevance of Marshall McLuhan's 1964 dictum, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan 1964: 7): social media are overtaking even the border-crossing power of the mass media of Said's day, with Twitter, facebook, Youtube and the others helping spark and maintain revolutions that heretofore would have withered on the vine. Reading Edward Said through the lens of the Arab Spring, one might conclude that Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities is thus both bolstered by nationalism, and supersedes it – with immigrants identifying in varying degrees both with the land of their ancestors and their adopted homeland.

At the time that Said was writing, the fear had been that "all departments of culture, not just news broadcasting, ha[d] been invaded by or enclosed within an ever-expanding circle of privately held corporations". If that was the fear at the time, might we not consider that this fear has by now taken firm root in the common consciousness of those ensconced in academia? Has the individual found ways to circumvent control by such corporate imperialism? This would seem unlikely, but still remains to be seen. One notes, with Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, that revolutionaries can re-impose the very strictures they had opposed. They sink back into "a world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls" (Said 1993: 372).

Conversely, can populist involvement in street politics be manipulated by the facile application of words like 'terrorist' or some version of 'great satan'? The fear one hears expressed by many in western democratic states is that Islamic countries will, as promised, conduct a vote – but will only do so once. This

is the criticism at the heart of the silence in much of the west when the army overthrew Morsi: that reactionary Islamic enthusiasts, having attained legitimate power through election, would now take blunt measures to ensure the maintenance of their hold on that position. The power of the populace has traditionally been easy to manipulate by authoritarian governments that play to an uninformed populism that is couched in the country's carefully nurtured jingoism – but is that still the case in a twittering and blogging younger generation of citizens? In *Culture and Imperialism* Said points out that

> during the exhilarating heyday of decolonization [...] Fanon was one of the few to remark on the dangers posed to a great socio-political movement like decolonization by an untutored national consciousness. Much the same could be said about the dangers of an untutored religious consciousness. Thus the appearance of various mullahs, colonels, and one-party regimes who pleaded national security risks and the need to protect the foundling revolutionary state as their platform, foisted a new set of problems onto the already considerably onerous heritage of imperialism (Said 1993: 371).

An optimist might be tempted to ask whether the re-enclosure of populist expression has somehow broken forth from its chains in the various local movements dubbed controversially as the Arab Spring (cf. Massad, Toumi, sourcewatch).

However the various revolutions may be eventually assessed, it seemed notable to many observers in 2011 that social media were being used as surprisingly effective tools by the masses, often apparently countering the long-established media powers of the state. In its Global Attitudes Project, in December of 2012 the Pew Research Center concluded that "social media users in Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan still take to social media to discuss politics at nearly twice the rate of their Western counterparts" (Wike 2012); of

every 10 users in these countries, six post about religion, whereas in the United States it is one in three, and in Western Europe that number is one in 10. In all countries surveyed, "the users skew young and educated" and they are a higher percentage of the population in the West than in the Middle East. One significant Pew finding has to do with the purpose to which these social media are put, with Americans casual and jokey, and Middle Eastern users engaging on critical issues "like politics and community". The Dubai School of Government report on social media in 2012 concluded that "from merely being used as a tool for social networking and entertainment, social media now infiltrates almost every aspect of the daily lives of millions of Arabs, affecting the way they interact socially, do business, deal with government, or engage in civil society movements" (Salem & Mourtada 2012: 2). According to the Dubai study,

> during the protests in Egypt and Tunisia, the vast majority of 200-plus people surveyed over three weeks in March said they were getting their information from social media sites (88 percent in Egypt and 94 percent in Tunisia).This outnumbered those who turned to non-governmental local media (63 percent in Egypt and 86 percent in Tunisia) and to foreign media (57 percent in Egypt and 48 percent in Tunisia) (Huang 2011: 2).

Word of mouth, which otherwise might be sidelined as mere gossip, here takes on a more significant role as a trusted (at least, easily and quickly disputed or validated) source of information. The authorities' efforts to block out information, the report said, ended up "spurring people to be more active, decisive and to find ways to be more creative about communicating and organizing" (Huang, 2). The level of personal involvement in serving as reporters-on-the-ground is notable, and indicative of a level of commitment to changing class structures – for some indeterminate length of time – that is interesting.

The following year, in June of 2013, a report from the same Dubai School of Government did not focus on social media and revolution, but rather on the

uses of social media in breaking through barriers for education; pertinent to our discussion here are their findings that "facebook registered an increase of 10 million users between June 2012 and May 2013", Twitter users in the Arab world has jumped "from just over 2 million to 3.7 million in the past year," and "LinkedIn users in select Arab countries stands now close to 5 million" (Salem, Mourtada & Alshaer 2013: 2).

What might these recent events tell us about communication theory and its role in "nation building"? For McLuhan "the personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves–result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (McLuhan 1964: 7). Thus, the content of the tweets and other communications between those involved in the ongoing revolutions are significant, but so too is the form in which that content is being transferred – the "new scale" of communication patterns. Structures are slowly being changed by the "social media" aspect of these media: there are social implications of these media more obviously than in earlier forms of communication. The revolutionary functionality of social media exemplifies structural changes arguably countered by the quick imposition of a new constitution by the Muslim Brotherhood that forecloses ongoing revolution by institutionalizing a particularly harsh alternative hegemony.

Still, the pendulum continues to swing, and a comfortable balance may still be found in the wild confrontation between the sacred and the secular. Time will tell whether social media will be effective not only in challenging new orthodoxies, but also in actually putting into practice the "ongoing revolution" that is so easily proclaimed by so many post-revolutionary dictators. One thinks of the optimistic call for an "ecclesia semper reformanda", as proclaimed by Reformed Protestant theologians in 1674 and by ecclesiastical reformers of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s, acknowledgments that all orthodoxies (religious or political) need to be vigilant against the enticements of ossification

and the comforts of excluding other voices. Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism* that

> Truly this has been the age of Ayatollahs, in which a phalanx of guardians (Khomeini, the Pope, Margaret Thatcher) simplify and protect one or another creed, essence, primordial faith. One fundamentalism invidiously attacks the others in the name of sanity, freedom, and goodness. A curious paradox is that religious fervor seems almost always to obscure notions of the sacred or divine, as if those could not survive in the overheated, largely secular atmosphere of fundamentalist combat (Said 1993: 397).

A prophet who recognized the human failings of those in the Middle East as well as those in the west, he also observed that Americans – so proud of their exceptionalism and their self-proclaimed role as a city on a hill for those around the world laboring under authoritarian regimes – nonetheless largely maintained strong support for their government's policy of supporting dictators in the hope of maintaining the status quo in their own lives, as well as their apparent support 'for a scale of violence out of all proportion to the violence of native insurgency against American allies" (Said 1993: 391); he notes, too, their embrace of hostility to legitimate claims to native nationalism kept in place "with an almost perfect correspondence between prevailing government policy and the ideology ruling news presentation and selection" (Said 1993: 390). This begs the question of the comparable role of social media in the west, and the role it might play in destabilizing the hegemonic control of world news and worldviews that Said decries in news corporations.

It remains to be seen how long a revolution can continue that has, as its sinews, mobile phones. Egypt is the laboratory here, more so than, for example, Syria with over 100,000 dead – but in both cases the conversation between culture and imperialism is crucial. While asserting that "the job facing the cultural

intellectual is therefore not to accept the politics of identity as given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what components" (Said 1993: 380). Said also worried that "our critical efforts are small and primitive, for the media are not only a fully integrated practical network, but a very efficient *mode of articulation* [his emphasis] knitting the world together" (Said 1993: 374).

Facebook and Twitter may not withstand the larger focus and cultural imperialism of CNN, Fox News, Al Jazeera, let alone the CIZ, al Qaeda, and even mass inertia in the western world, but Said also notes that hybridity must be preceded by awkward misplacements of self. He writes that

> contrapuntal analysis should be modeled [...] on an atonal ensemble; we must take into account all sorts of spatial or geographical and rhetorical practices – inflections, limits, constraints, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions – all of them tending to elucidate a complex and uneven topography (Said 1993: 386).

Democracies can be loud, boorish, confrontational, and inefficient, and in the case of state evolutions the twittering echoes an engagement with something unfamiliar and therefore threatening.

The military coup in Egypt in July 2013 appears to many observers as a rough erasure of burgeoning self-expression. Many who have sought a way to defend the army's actions point out that the elected president of the country was advancing an Islamist agenda and cutting out major portions of the electorate in his policies, and that the military was, in fact, (re)asserting the will of a majority of Egyptians. Whatever the view that history will take of that ongoing revolution, which will surely have several other chapters before a meaningful and democratic stability materializes, the commonly accepted expectations of social media so evident in Mubarak's overthrow continue now

in Morsi's. On July 5 2013 the stream.aljazeera.com blog broadcast the following exchanges:

- from Mahtab Hossain Siddiqui at the Institute of Business Administration in Dhaka, Bangladesh: "Egyptians will regret this day. The same thing was done by Turkish Army against Necmatin Erbakan. But all of those Generals are in jail now and AKP is in power for 11 years".

- Michael D. Stocker at Northampton Community College responds: "Egyptians won't regret this, obviously you are not following twitter/facebook/vine and just about every other social media that the youth (being 19 to 24) are using. They are the ones that are done with Islam, and the ones that do NOT want a country run by an Islamic preacher and his aides".

- To which Ahmad el Masri at the University of Western Sydney responds: "Michael D. Stocker you are wrong they are not done with Islam, they are done with MB [Muslim Brotherhood], please distinguish between the two".

- And Amran Hafiz (location not given) joins in: "Right on Ahmad [...] Islam will prevail till the end of time".

- Shaheen K. Moidunny at the Indian High School writes: "elected President and elected Members of Parliament have been imprisoned – no liberal/secular/left condemnation […] all media outlets critical of the military intervention and presumed to be MB has been forcibly shutdown – no liberal/secular/left condemnation, etc".

- Ahmad el Masri returns to the conversation, supporting Moidunny and saying "shame on that mob in Tahrir square for supporting a military coup whilst at the same breath saying that they are 'liberals'".

- But Abdul Hafeel, at Al Azhar Muslim College Hemmathagama answers, delphically: "This what Egyptians want let them enjoy [...]"
- And Eugene Denson, described as a self-employed critical defense lawyer (country unstated), answers that "One of the greatest advances in human governance is the separation of church and state. Religious governments become tyrannical governments, and need to be overthrown at the first signs of moving in the direction of imposing their views on people of differing beliefs".
- Ahmad el Masri is not giving up, responding that "Islam ruled for thousands of years successfully without tyranny, please study the golden age of Islam".
- Muideen Luqman at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria argues that "It's no doubt that the WEST has input in this and of course, this is their desire. The truth will surely prevail".
- From India, Mohamed Omer, a yoga therapist, writes: "In the name of rebellion the Egyptian people once again gone into the hands of the military regime and Mubarak hands foolish peoples" [sic];
- Amran Hafiz rejoins the conversation with "Only fools are bitten twice...may Allah have mercy on them",
- and Tanvir Ahmed Nabil, the "lead guitarist at Fallen", writes: "constitution was suspended by the military last night to defeat a democratically elected president. As a result the Egyptians who were protesting against Morsi in many parts are celebrating and chanting 'victory to democracy'. What a joke!"

Among the interesting characteristics that might be observed in this exchange (which, of course, continued beyond these extracts) is Ahmad el Masri's apparent nostalgia for the caliphate. More importantly for the topic of this essay, the bloggers represent the international quality of the Arab Spring, even if much of that participation is vicarious. Some contributors are Egyptian, some

are apparently not Muslim, etc., and all are entering in to a real-time conversation. All that is missing is the skype camera – though most of the entries are accompanied with a little snapshot of the 'speaker'. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said wrote that

> It is not possible to name many states or regimes that are exempt from active intellectual and historical participation in the new postcolonial international configuration…[but] what had once been the imaginative liberation of a people – Aimé Césaire's "inventions of new soul" – and the audacious metaphoric charting of spiritual territory usurped by colonial masters were quickly translated into and accommodated by a world system of barriers, maps, frontiers, police forces, customs and exchange controls (Said 1993: 372).

It is perhaps utopian, and is certainly premature, to imagine that the use of social media in the Arab Spring is working to counter these retrograde forces described by Said – but one can but wait and see; better said, one can but wait and listen.

NOTES

1. See, for example, right-wing former one-term congressman Alan West (Republican, Florida) (http://crooksandliars.com/kenneth-quinnell/allen-west-r-fl-says-arab-spring-), Israeli Home Front Defense Minister Avi Dichter (http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Muslim-Brothers-co-opting-Arab-Spring-to-make-caliphate), and Uthman Badar, Mohammed Jeelani, Halim Rane and Haytham Yonus (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEllGxB9Vhs).

2. On the contentious nature of the term "Arab Spring", see the September 12, 2012 anonymous article "Arab Spring" in Sourcewatch, the anonymous July 4 2013 article, "Morsis' overthrow sets Egypt's Twitter alight", in

Stream.aljazeera, Joseph Massad's 2012 essay, and Habib Toumi's essay from December 17, 2011.

3. See also: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eE2itEB__v8&feature=related.

4. See Hawley 2008.

5. See Clay Shirky 2011.

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'Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories' in Postcolonial Art

Abstract I: This paper is inspired by the complicated cartographies and the unstable maps of the contemporary world. Following Edward Said's concern for the 'geographical inquiry' that also involves ideas and images, this essay reflects firstly on the critical value of visuality as a space where meanings are created and contested, and then plunges into a more specific exploration of the territories of art. In particular, emerging from a postcolonial horizon of migration and hybridity, the artworks that will fuel the investigation propose a map of multiple crossings and contribute to the imagination of alternative archives.

Abstract II: Questo saggio si ispira alle cartografie complicate e alle mappe instabili del mondo contemporaneo; sulla scia della connotazione geografica della ricerca di Edward Said, l'articolo intende riflettere in primo luogo sul valore critico della visualità in quanto spazio in cui i significati sono prodotti e contestati, e poi offrire un'esplorazione più ravvicinata dei territori dell'arte. In particolare, emergendo da un orizzonte postcoloniale di migrazione e ibridità, i lavori artistici che danno corpo all'analisi propongono una mappa di attraversamenti multipli e contribuiscono all'immaginazione di archivi alternativi.

Postcolonial Horizons and Visual Culture

> Art is the opening up of the universe to becoming – other.
>
> (Grosz 2008: 23)

This paper engages with the complexity of the contemporary world and explores the critical tensions that emerge from questions of space and spatiality. These issues are inextricably related to the cartographies of power that constantly produce social inequalities, racial differences and blocks of stereotypes on a global scale. With this concern in mind, it is quite clear that imperial and neocolonial strategies are far from over: these questions are of the greatest importance when we try to deconstruct the violence that is at the core of Western hegemony. As Achille Mbembe has recently argued, the focus is not on the critique of the West *per se*, but of the consequences produced by 'colonial' conceptions of reason and humanism (2008). In this way, colonisation is not considered as a closed and immutable chapter of history, but as a trans-national and trans-cultural global process that produces passages, interstices and in–between spaces that shape the world we live in.

The dynamic interdependence between the past and the present, between colonisers and colonised, has been largely developed by Edward Said's work. In this regard, his commitment for the complex connection between imperialism and knowledge represents an important resource for the study of the contemporary historical and cultural processes (1994). He takes into account the profound cultural dimensions of the imperial strategies and develops the well–known idea of 'overlapping territories, intertwined histories' that belong simultaneously to distinct contexts and interconnected subjectivities. The traces of the historical legacy of colonialism become the basis for a theoretical and pragmatic work in the present moment.

Indeed, if we observe European nations through a postcolonial lens, it becomes clear that decolonised peoples who have made their home in Europe

act as a perpetual reminder of the ways in which the once metropolitan and imperial centres have been forged by the narrations of their global peripheries. Migratory movements of bodies and imaginaries have thus contributed to the constitution of a trans-national and diasporic world, and to the displacement of cultural identities. In this way, the postcolonial horizon critically interrupts the historiographical chronicle transmitted within univocal and unchangeable parameters. Moreover, the theoretical value of the term 'postcolonial' does not merely describe a particular society or a particular epoch. Rather, it takes into account diasporic rewritings and creative re–elaborations of grand narratives.

These encounters render the traditional and inherited categories of nation and identity very problematic. As Iain Chambers has argued, this is to call into question the linearity of progress, to decelerate its anxiety, and to insist on a multiple modernity folded into other times and spaces (2008). Moreover, from the perspective of Occidental humanism the centrality of visuality represents the hegemonic modality of knowledge. This is not to refuse the plane of the visual, but to think about the importance that maps, writings and visual representations have had historically to confirm the humanistic projects supported by institutions and experts (scholars, teachers and missionaries). In this regard, Said believes that the isolation of the aesthetic realm has been essential in the West since the eighteenth century to reinforce hegemony and to acquire distant territories. All cultural forms are therefore hybrid: they must be inscribed in the global processes.

Such work is also concerned with analysing the forms of resistance to hegemony, defined by Antonio Gramsci – and then expanded by Said – as the intellectual and moral leadership that contributes to maintain the dominant order. Since the 1970s and 1980s, during the conservative regimes of Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States, the exploration of counter-hegemonic practices and ideas has been crucial for Anglophone critical thought. In particular, the University of Birmingham Centre

for Contemporary Cultural Studies, founded in 1964, concentrated on representations of class, race, gender and class in order to study the effects that media had on audiences. From the very beginning this approach came to focus on the strategies of resistance and contestation that subvert dominant regimes of representation, defined by Stuart Hall as the production of meaning through language. The image can function as a sign or text that transmits meanings that, nonetheless, require the subjective capacities of the viewer to make images signify.

Within this theoretical and practical context, visuality – as a cultural practice – refers to the registers in which both the image and its visual meanings operate. An essential inspiration for these intuitions is represented by Frantz Fanon, whose work activates psychoanalysis in the investigation of colonialism and the visual construction of racism; in particular, Fanon examines the power of the gaze and its capacity to establish the racial identities through social and psychic processes. In *Black Skin. White Masks* this dynamics becomes very clear:

> 'Dirty nigger!' Or simply, 'Look, a Negro!'
> I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.
> Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. [...] But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye (Fanon 1986: 109).

It is through the Other's gaze that Fanon unveils 'the fact of blackness'. He discovers himself as a black subaltern subject once he comes to the metropolitan centres of the colonial empires. The realm of visuality becomes an interdisciplinary and fluid interpretative frame, in which social interactions of racialized identities, gender and class are debated and contested. At the end

of the Nineties, then, 'visual culture' comes to be defined as a transversal field of inquiry that crosses art, cinema and media studies. The interactions between the viewer subject and the viewed object become, in Nicholas Mirzoeff's intuitions, the visual 'events' that provoke the creation and the circulation of images (1999). Visuality is thus developed as a problematic place, where it is possible to re–think the consolidation of power as a visualised model on a global scale and the place of visual subjects within that system, in other words people defined as the agents of sight and as the objects of particular discourses of visuality. Through ambivalences and interstices the issue of power in the field of visual culture concerns the question of representation. In particular, this interconnection leads to the very specificity of the images that confront the new and emerging conditions of contemporary society.

Geographical Inquiry and Art Spaces

The past decades have witnessed an increased interest of critical theory for the significance of spatiality, in particular for the heterogeneous formation of space that confuses rigorous strategies of mapping and locating. As Irit Rogoff suggests, the critical dimension of spatiality insists on the condition of multiple belonging and is in contrast with nation states, which insist on a singular inhabitation under one dominant rule (2000). Therefore, space is unavoidably characterised by boundary lines, social relations and psychic forces that constantly produce strategies of inclusion and exclusion.

Said is not necessarily associated with this emergent field of inquiry, however he represents an important precursor and resource. His deep interest in spatiality allows him to construct an imaginative geography of identities and a map of the changing constellations of power and knowledge. In particular, in *Culture and Imperialism* he tries to do what he calls "a kind of geographical inquiry into historical experience", and engages in the so–called "struggle over geography" (Said 1994: 6). In having the topographies of the major

metropolitan cultures in mind, Said outlines their 'structures of attitude and reference' that clearly resonate with Williams's seminal work on the 'structures of feeling'. Specifically, Said refers to the ways in which these structures appear, sometimes allusively, in the languages of individual works of literature, history and ethnography. The dissemination of geographical references has the power to create and recognise territories and unveils a constancy of concern that arises, not from a pre–determined plan, rather from the development of national cultural identity. Indeed, the construction of identity is bound up with the imagination of geographically conceived locations and desirable but subordinate peripheral worlds.

Narrative is the contested 'territory' that Said explores: how issues of imperialism and colonialism are reflected, decided, and even debated in narrative. However, his concern brings the question of visuality to the fore: the struggle over geography "is also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings" (Said 1994: 6). In this way, visuality is always rooted in the earth, that is to say in the material context where meanings are constructed and called into question. Because of this, Said's work proposes to reinterpret the Western cultural archive and to register its geographical fragmentation. As in Western classical music, where polyphony results from the different themes and not from an abstract unity, the rereading of the archive has to be 'contrapuntal'. This means to insist on the simultaneous registration both of the grand narratives and those other histories that are left out. At this point alternative memories emerge and express strategies of resistance. Said's geographical inquiry allows to reflect on a visual approach, in order to investigate the tensions between vision and power.

To some extent the project of visual culture has been to repopulate space with all the unknown images removed by the illusion of transparency. Visual arts are able to register the indeterminacy of space, open to a multitude of traces and to a more complicated history. Here, the theoretical writings of Stuart Hall,

Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak are particularly powerful when we approach works produced by artists who come from – or are connected to – previously colonised countries. However, as Gen Doy suggests, there cannot be any straightforward identification between artworks and criticism (Doy 2000). Despite the fact that there are convergences and issues in common, art has the power to test and reconfigure theories. From it we can expect not only practical outcomes, but also enhanced and further critical thought.

This leads to the idea that art leaves the shores of representation to propose an ethical event. Elizabeth Grosz defines art as experimentation with reality and the material forces of the world, rather than a mere representation of the real (Kontturi & Tiainen 2007). Artistic practices are the sites of imagination and possess the potential to change the world. They can be explored in a more compelling way if one thinks not in terms of representation, but in terms of force and intensity. This is also the intensity of thought because "thinking gives us joy, perceiving gives us joy" (Kontturi & Tiainen 2007: 225). For the theorist we need to affirm the joyousness of art and the pleasure of critical thought. These can be forms of self–understanding and ways to resist the oppression that comes from everywhere as Grosz points out:

> I mean the point is the way in which the new world is produced is precisely through revelling in the affirmation of the strengths that art gives us. The only way we can make a new world is by having a new horizon. And this is something that art can give us: a new world, a new body, a people to come (Kontturi & Tiainen 2007: 256).

Following Gilles Deleuze, Grosz states that art expresses the invisible and unheard reality of things. It addresses problems and provokes, not so much the elaboration of images in which the subject might recognise itself, but real changes and reciprocal exchanges of elements. It is for this reason that art cannot be a frivolous ornamentation: it is a vital form of impact that does not

merely concentrate on the observation of an object or the development of a plot, but on the resonances, the transitions and the silences. Therefore, art cannot be considered as a window on other worlds, but as the place where experimentations are brought into being. In this sense, "art is intensely political": it elaborates alternative possibilities and provokes a perceptual anticipation of the future (Grosz 2008: 79).

Artistic production is therefore not so much to be read and interpreted. It cannot be the object of a political and social analysis, but the site where previous statements are questioned. For Thelma Golden, director and chief curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem, art can change the way we think about culture and ourselves. Her overall project is about artists such as, for instance, Glenn Ligon and Kara Walker who reflect on American historiography through the lens of a black history, in which Harlem was a city with a large black presence. The artists Golden is interested in really concretise the essential questions she wants to bring to the fore as a curator:

> I was interested in the idea of why and how I could create a new story, a new narrative in art history and a new narrative in the world. And to do this, I knew that I had to see the way in which artists work, understand the artist's studio as a laboratory, imagine, then, reinventing the museum as a think tank and looking at the exhibition as the ultimate white paper – asking questions, providing the space to look and to think about answers (Golden 2009).

The point Golden raises is extremely important: artists can provide a space where to work and to think through art. For example, contemporary artists such as Isaac Julien and Zineb Sedira (Anglo–Caribbean the former, French–Algerian the latter) intervene in the aesthetic strategies in order to propose alternative configurations of space. In their recent work, mainly audio–visual installations elaborated on multiple screens in museums and galleries, Julien and Sedira do

not intend to transmit a linear narrative reading of the content. Indeed, the term 'installation' is linked to concepts such as interaction, project and event. Some of its main features include: the immersive aspect that challenges the traditional perceptive habits of the audience through images and sounds that go beyond the physical limits of space; the tendency towards a negotiated collaboration between artists and curators, in order to build a critical platform of discussion and transform the museum institution into a cultural laboratory; the centrality of themes such as 'temporality' and 'memory' that question official narratives and historiographies; and the movement of the spectators that displaces the traditional division between the viewing subject and the viewed object. In this way, digital technologies intensify experimentations and contribute to the questioning of traditional considerations. In an installation the artwork, indeed, is transformed into an open structure that engages the viewer in the same way a performance would.

The Migratory Aesthetics of Postcolonial Art

Within the complex cartography of global modernity, the encounter with art proposes a critical reflection on the intertwining cultural, geographical, historical and economical contexts of the contemporary world. Thinking with postcolonial art does not mean to propose a classifying phrase or taxonomy. Rather, emerging from experiences of hybridity and migration, art elaborates an ethical–aesthetical cut or interruption "across and within an inherited Occidental art discourse that leads simultaneously to recovery and renewal" (Chambers 2012: 22). Expressing the interweaving of memories, this art questions forms, canons and genres, and explores the relation between identity and difference, geographic locations and dislocations.

The impossibility of representing the wholeness of memory is reflected in the cuts, in the emphasis on traces, intervals and fragments. Postcolonial poetics proposes a politics that interrupts modernity to elaborate an alternative visual

space. Here, the focus is on the question of migration and its relation to cinematic and artistic productions, where hybridity becomes integral to cultural productions. For example, the aforementioned artist Sedira concretises on a formal level the condition of living in the interstices. Working with film and still images she has developed a language in the last ten years that connects issue of migration, mobility and displacement. For example, her piece Floating Coffins (2009) is a constellation of fragmented moving images and sounds about the harbour city of Nouadhibou, on the coast of Mauritania. Facing the Atlantic Coast this town is today one of the main points of departure for those who leave in search of better lives. Across fourteen screens and ten round speakers the installation proposes a displacing flux of sounds and images that evoke the desperate clandestine migrations: migrating birds, desert lands, old boats abandoned in the water as coffins.

Postcolonial art appears in the simultaneously political, historical, and theoretical conjuncture of the diasporic experience. Diaspora, as a specific framework of transformations and dislocations, gains a historical specificity in the moment of post–war global migrations (Hall 2012). However, diaspora defines also an emergent field of inquiry and an important interpretive frame for exploring the political, economical and cultural ramifications of the conditions of migrancy. Always in formation, this is the context where the politics of gender, class, and race form together a new, powerful and unstable articulation that does not provide easy answers, but raises "new questions, which proliferate across older frames of thought, social engagement and political activity" (Hall 2012: 30). Therefore, the contemporary idea of diaspora is rooted not only in earlier imperial settlements and older structures of power, but also in the experience of the vulnerable minorities and the conditions of the refugee camps, the detention centres, and the invisible economies of the advanced world.

The notions of a cultural authenticity and a stable national identity are

thus called into question by postcolonial art. For example, in Julien's multi–screen work WESTERN UNION: Small Boats (2007), the materiality of the images emerges through the bodies of the immigrants who cross the Mediterranean: bodies that traverse the fluid space of the sea in search of a better life. This is a postcolonial cartography that rethinks cultural places such as the Mediterranean and takes a heterogeneous modernity into account. WESTERN UNION: Small Boats proposes, indeed, a disturbing geography of the intermediary space of the Mediterranean, crossed by the fluxes of human beings. The mare nostrum comes to be a burial site that resonates with the Atlantic middle passage: traumatic memories common to men and women, and traces of the daily experiences of migrants disorient the spectators' expectations. Furthermore, in the five screens that build Julien's installation, the sea is not only a surface that permits movement and migration, but becomes a sea of memories that recalls the 'intertwined histories and overlapping territories' proposed by Said.

The disturbing geography expressed by Julien's installation is a meditation on migration and, what is more, provokes the "migration", or the transit and the transformation, of previous statements in the context of the museum and the curatorial practices. WESTERN UNION: Small Boats is the final work of a trilogy that also includes the audiovisual installations *True North* (2004) and *Fantôme Afrique* (2005), conceived by Julien as a trilogy of journeys and dislocations across different continents and cultures. In particular, *True North* is a cinematic rewriting of the North Pole exploration narratives of the twentieth century. The title is a pun on the idea of true north and magnetic north, and refers to the relation between the site of North Pole and the compass. Julien questions the objectivity of science, and the fact the North Pole is perceivable only through scientific instruments. He also challenges the mythical aspect of the true north, in other words the northern American sense of a true north as a nationalistic, mythological and nation–building narration. *True North* tells a narrative of

discovery excluded by official historiography, namely the story of Matthew Henson, the African–American man who went with Robert Peary and some Inuit to the North Pole in 1909. His black presence in the white landscape disrupts the white supremacy and the normative male subject. What strikes is that Henson is interpreted by the black British actress Vanessa Myrie who wanders – as a nomad, an explorer and also a witness – through this glacial landscape and displaces its whiteness.

For Françoise Vergès the landscape in Julien's artwork is sublime because it evokes a new exploration of space, through the narration of Henson's voyage (2005). As a map of displacements in time and space, this poetic and creolised scape becomes an affective reality of narrations. Julien is certainly inspired by Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), in particular by the notion of 'translocation', in other words the idea of continuous movements that contaminate each other. Julien, the son of Caribbean immigrants in London, demonstrates this chain of transits in his work and insists on a hybrid articulation between heterogeneous spaces. Finally, True North is definitely a question around geo–politics, because it shows a concern for the past but also for the environment: Henson footsteps cross spaces, as the ice glaciers, that are melting and disappearing.

The disturbing geography of the contemporary world is also central to Julien's piece *Fantôme Afrique*, the second installation of the trilogy, where references to the urban space of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso – that since 1969 has hosted FESPACO, the major panafrican film festival – are woven together with the ruins of modernity. Archival images of the colonial missions in Africa and the struggles for independence are registered by two unsettling characters, a man and a woman, who witness history's wreckage in the present. In *Fantôme Afrique*, the ghosts – or we could say the 'angels' to recall Walter Benjamin's theses on history – witness the ruins of the past and simultaneously are driven helplessly into the future. The different trajectories of the two

characters often overlap: as Vergès reminds us, the postcolonial world experiences new cartographies of intertextuality that emerge as spaces of conflicts and relations, exchanges and encounters (2005).

The trans–local artworks realised by Julien or Sedira provoke a different configuration of modernity, a liquid one, based on the centrality of transits, trans-cultural movements, and the trauma of migration. Liquid modernity, the present condition of the world, involves both the unmaking of Europe as a space of exemplarity, exception and privilege and the remaking of Europe as a space of trans-cultural ferment, movements and transits. The innovative languages of the visual arts become instruments of knowledge and change; specifically, cinema, enhanced by digital technologies, creates an interesting expressive space for the postcolonial perspective. For instance, the digital images created by Trinh T. Minh–ha represent another important example of heterogeneous spatiality. In particular, the digital images in her film *Night Passage* (2004) work on the intervals and the encounters between the scenes. Offering a dislocation that cuts across cinema, painting and theatre, *Night Passage* is a visual poem set on a night train that evolves around the journey of a young woman, her best friend and a little boy. At each stop of the train, the passengers' histories come from darkness and open to a trans-cultural condition.

Since the film highlights the transition from one state to another, the focus is on passages, where 'the gap becomes the bridge'. Images, like the passengers of the night train, appear, disappear and re–appear with no apparent continuity, except for the continuity of the movement of the images themselves. As Trinh Minh–ha points out, the digital video image is an image constantly in formation, that gives great attention to the time of the between and the crossroads, to transformation and transition as time–spaces (Trinh 2005). Here, the prefix 'trans' does not indicate a transit between rigid boundaries or a reduction of differences, but an interdependence between things that stresses the very condition of living in interstitial spaces.

Like the above–cited artworks by Sedira and Julien, Trinh Minh–ha's *Night Passage* resonates materially with the "overlapping territories, intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non–whites" suggested by Said (Said 1994: 72). As he remarks, looking back at the archive means reading it contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the dominant history and of those other histories against which the dominating discourse operates. Visual arts can be considered theoretical and material tools that challenge the humanist perspective, according to which the archive is a social and neutral tool that secures the most significant parts of the past. As Arjun Appadurai has proposed, the archive should be regarded as "a search for the memories that count and not a home for memories with a pre–ordained significance" (Appadurai 2003: 23). This is to insist on the archive as a work of imagination and aspiration that brings out what is neglected and repressed. For migrants, in particular, the idea of a living archive becomes extremely important, from the most intimate one to the most electronic and public one. Through their experiences, we can see how archives register spaces of debate and desire. In this sense, postcolonial art, emerging from diasporic and liminal spaces, elaborates the strategies of archiving as forms of intervention. Beyond the languages of trauma and loss, its contribution evokes sites of re–creation; beyond the rhetoric of geography, it invokes heterotopic spaces that proliferate through multiple and coexisting realities.

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Grading Cultural Imperialism in English Language Theory and Practice

Abstract I: This essay explores the ways in which Edward W. Said's critical theories have been employed by contemporary applied linguists to explain the relation between the English language and its long colonial history – an approach to language theory and practice that is still less than marginal in Italian universities. The essay also presents a challenging exercise by blending an excerpt from Edgar Schneider's popular textbook *English Around the World* (2011) with key-images of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in an attempt to provide exemplification of a critical-linguistic exercise.

Abstract II: L'articolo analizza l'impiego del pensiero critico di Edward W. Said da parte di linguisti contemporanei al fine di spiegare il rapporto tra la lingua inglese e la sua lunga storia coloniale – un approccio alla teoria e alla pratica della lingua che rimane ad oggi più che marginale nelle università italiane. Il saggio, inoltre, elabora una possibile applicazione delle teorie saidiane allo studio della lingua ideando un esercizio che unisce un passo del noto manuale di Edgar Schneider *English Around the World* (2011) a immagini chiave da *Cuore di tenebra* di Joseph Conrad al fine di produrre un'ipotesi di esercizio linguistico-critico.

Introduction

This essay originates as a reflection on the discrepant situation I have found myself in for the last twelve years as a university instructor of English language and a scholar in postcolonial cultures and literatures, divided between what I do as a teacher using pre-packed course books and handbooks of applied

linguistics and what I know and research as an engaged humanist. Facing, for instance, a listening comprehension exercise in which a British businessman based in Hong Kong appears like a mirage – literally "as an angel" (Soars & Soars 2008: 105) – to a Chinese woman desperately looking for a British native speaker, with specific pedigree, to practice her knowledge of Trollope's novels, is a unique hilarious way to begin practicing the language. Or, better, it would be so, were it the case that students were supposed to engage with the obvious propaganda hidden in the text, and that, in an English language class it was not utterly out of place to even think of speaking about cultural contents or to raise any *critical* issue at all. As a matter of fact, what usually happens is that implied cultural references simply pass through onto the students' memory, there to become one with their 'linguistic' knowledge of English (Cimarosti 2012).

In this respect, this essay is a two-fold challenge because it figures out an English language class where both students and instructor are trained enough in postcolonial theory and in general in criticism so as to be able to open the archive of English language studies – possibly the only major archive of Western knowledge mostly religiously sealed – and assess the degree of colonial discourse therein contained. In such a class, students can do exercises in 'contrapuntal reading' as part of the language learning curriculum and 'grading cultural imperialism' may be part of ordinary homework. Such exercise involves a 'grading' activity in the three different meanings of this word: students are asked 1) to mark and *assess* any trace of colonial discourse present in the text; 2) to *flatten or smooth* out the varying ideological inclination by considering their *raison d'être*; 3) to find *a hybridised position* no matter if for or against it, as long as the student can negotiate a standpoint rather than being unwarily positioned by the text. And if the idea of doing such a complex exercise raise a few eyebrows among the experts, this is because in Italy Anglophone studies have long been religiously halved into too neat a literature-language divide which impedes the use of critique and of any other humanistic

expertise in the English language classroom, de facto keeping language curricula stuck to a modernist age that has never reached beyond structuralism, hence devoid of the crucial contributions of postmodern and postcolonial insights whose introduction of forms of resistant pedagogy and critical applied linguistics, as well as their view of language based on practice rather than system, would provide adequate preparation to tackle the challenges of this globalised era and its several new forms of Anglophilia (Canagarajah 2013; Pennycook 2010). 'Grading' exercises such as the one I propose would form language students able to interact within the complex dynamics that constitute English in today's world, a global language shaped by interweaving currents of neo-colonial and postcolonial discourses which one should be familiar with, no matter if one is learning the present simple or attending a course about the 'global spread of English'. Both types of language courses *of* and *about* English are in fact offered through textbooks typically made up of a mix of popular culture that define the nature of English and of pedagogical procedures whose supposed objective methodology stems from a European monolingual, and monolithic, orientation to language and to language learning (Canagarajah 2013: 19-34; Phillipson 1992: 181-211). This is certainly the case of the Global English textbook that I will linger on in some detail by way of conclusion.

However, before reaching there, I will take two main steps which should explain the full import of the grading exercise. I will first address some basic connections between Said's criticism and English language theories and practices as drawn by two critical applied linguists, Suresh Canagarajah and Alastair Pennycook; then I will briefly present the variational linguistics sub-field called 'Global English', to indicate some mechanisms ruling its discourse as used in Edgar Schneider's *English Around the World* (Schneider 2011), one of the most popular and accredited textbooks of this sub-genre to date.

Culture and Imperialism in English Language Theories and Practices

In the first chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said talks about the need to see and understand the relations between the facts of empire and its culture, a relation determining what he notoriously defines as the 'worldliness' of all fields of knowledge, their tight connection with politics and social actions, a basic notion whose validity he confirms in his later work (Said 2004: 48-49, 61). At the same time, he insists on the need to explore the very way by which relations are made, including those among fields of study, because "the way we make connections informs our vision of the present" (Said 1993: 18). It is this latter self-reflexive understanding that allows us to really see against the grains not only the complex network composing the map of cultures, hence the ideas and values which they identify with, but the arbitrary ways by which such meaningful configurations are drawn, their *constructedness*, the sight of which only grants us the chance of possibly negotiate with it. In this respect, he points out that two types of unfruitful relations have strongly contributed in order to draw the post-colonial map of today's world culture in continuation with old colonial logics: relations of blame of empire and of hostility towards the ex-colonised. In order to move forward, he adds, we need to transform such dated yet on-going legacies by seeing and retrieving the still unacknowledged complexity that lies behind their binary simplifications and to do so by using a critical approach which he famously defines as 'contrapuntal reading'. This would enable us to disclose the manifold network of relations that makes cultures intrinsically plural and diversified – rather than homogenous – their coterminous and overlapping territories, histories, cultures as well as their languages and literatures – rather than their neat separation or even opposition to one another – hence, to be positioned well beyond the bounds of national and nationalistic views and rhetoric (Said 1993: 35-49). Well into the globalised 2013-world, however, in the field of English language studies, almost nothing resembling such open perspective has become real practice, at least not to the extent of

reconfiguring our approach to language from consequential domains such as the planning of academic curricula and the ideation of new didactic activities. For instance, the adjective 'extraterritorial', used by language historians to define the ideological bias towards the new forms of English that developed in the ex-colonies in the era of British standard English prescriptivism (Mazzon 2000), turns up in contemporary conferences to define the acculturated varieties of English from postcolonial countries, no matter if these have developed their own standards and an outstanding literary tradition in English.

There is one major type of contextual and ideological relations that has been particularly functional in creating enduring colonial perspectives that have been embedded in the usage of colonial languages thence perpetuating their biases, which Said has called "structures of attitudes and references" (Said 1993: 61-62). Such cultural configurations of meanings have solidified and perpetuated themselves through specific genres and textual forms, in which simple words and language uses have acquired the power of reproducing stereotypical ideas and frames of mind, features charactering authoritative works, whose discourses, therefore, have remained mostly unchallenged, free to convey prejudiced ideas and consequential attitudes. From this perspective, Said has analysed in depth the main genre of the British nineteenth-century novel whose local stories, interspersed with vague hints at the colonised territories, acquire and expand a claim to power which allows homely, even provincial, values to become worldwide 'consolidated visions' with universal resonance, and so by mere recourse to casual references, gestures, poses and twists of the mother tongue. As a matter of fact, such rarefied allusions at social facts of empire policy and such apparently negligible parts in the novel's plot, establish a most consequential and strong relation with the colonial system in the backdrop bringing about and activating its ethnic and cultural hierarchies. In metaphorical prosaic terms, we may perhaps think of such references as of post-it notes stuck in an invisible empire context, without which messages would

lose their main meanings and functions – minimal notations binding spaces and temporalities and making them strangely and forcibly one, the empire being kept in motion also through little practical reminders scattered in the daily routine. Empire culture, therefore, works most effectively when it remains almost unsaid, anonymous, commingled with common sense, a hovering frame of reference determining abstract meanings against which one can hardly dispute but rather tends to agree with.

There is no better book than Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, that renders this most sophisticated use of English, perhaps due to the fact that Conrad – incredible as it may seem, judging from his mastery of the language – learnt English as a grown-up man and as a second foreign language, after French, which must have provided him with a special sensitivity towards the nuances of English and their crucial role when it comes to tackling its ideological power. Let's have a glimpse of the way his extraordinary novella records the way English implicitly conveys colonial 'values', by reading an exchange between the English manager and Marlow, who is leading the expedition upriver to meet Kurtz.

> He was just the kind of man who would wish to save appearances. That was his restraint. […] You couldn't imagine a more deadly place for a shipwreck. […] I authorize you to take all the risks," he said, after a short silence. "I refuse to take any," I said shortly; which was just the answer he expected, though its tone might have surprised him. "Well, I must defer to your judgement. You are captain," he said, with marked civility. I turned my shoulder to him in sign of my appreciation, and looked into the fog. […] Will they attack, do you think?" Asked the manager, a confidential tone (Conrad 2000: 72).

It is a minuet between Marlow and the manager, in which Marlow seduces his interlocutor AND finally persuades him of his fidelity to the empire's values so

dear to him, and merely manages to do so through his knowledge of the most subtle use of the language: the tone, the pauses, and the following gesture bestowing the few previous words with a sense of nobility and wide significance. All of which sounds so well to the manager's trained ears that their fellowship is sealed against the imminent enemy.

Said has also clearly explained how English has come to be amazingly frank about its relation with the discourses of the empire, which were made to identify with it and, therefore, to shape its very texture. English became the vehicle by which a discriminatory world knowledge was articulated by ordering – in both senses – human beings into races, and cultures and languages into fixed categories as well as by dictating specialised ways to be accounted for, as exemplified by Carlyle's discourses:

> Carlyle speaks a language of total generality, anchored in unshakeable certainties about the essence of races, peoples, cultures, all of which need little elucidation because they are familiar to his audience. He speaks a *lingua franca* for metropolitan Britain: global, comprehensive, and with so vast a social authority as to be accessible to anyone speaking to and about the nation. This lingua franca locates England at the focal point of a world also presided over by its power, illuminated by its ideas and culture, kept productive by the attitudes of its moral teachers, artists, legislators (Said 1993: 123).

If the English language was being shaped through the colonial discourses which it came to obsessively articulate, this same overlapping came also to shape the idea of an Anglo-Saxon ethnicity scattered over the large colonised world. This was made of a range of discourses about the extended and mixed British identity whose destiny was, from its historical multi-ethnic beginnings, that of ruling over other races, and whose powerful bond of affiliation was its rich composite language, with its deep-seated cultural discourses that showed

through when needed, constantly creating the sense of belonging to a universal British ethnicity whose home was now orderly scattered all around the world (Young 2008).

Besides being characterised by this fusion with colonial discourse, the English language came to tightly adhere also, and more fatally, to self-praising discourses *about* its structure and usage so that made-up ideas about its history and culture *became* the language. English was made to interiorise an artificial, historical, sense of Self through a stereophonic rhetoric about its superiority and suitability to rule over other languages, which became particularly intense in the second half of the 19th century and which sadly has continued to these days making colonial legacy a further, if still little considered, influence in its historical formation (Pennycook 1998; Phillipson 2008). Paradoxically enough, this is a part of the language history that is largely uncovered by historical linguists and which most audibly claims its existence as we can observe in the masked triumphalism of some contemporary linguists who advocate purely 'linguistic' reasons why it is English that has become 'the' world language (Crystal 2003; Svartvik & Leech 2006). Again, it is worth stopping here for a second, to introduce one more passage from *Heart of Darkness*, where this idea is presented through Marlow's description of Kurtz's magniloquent prose; Kurtz who – it is worth our notice – was, partly like Conrad, half-English and half-French, the quintessence, the novel says, of European intelligence:

> […] it was a beautiful piece of writing. The opening paragraph, however, in the light of later information, strikes me now as ominous. He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings […] by the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded," […] from that point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity

ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the unbounded power of eloquence – of words – of burning noble words (Conrad 2000: 83).

Today, just like yesterday, and incredible as it may seem, such discourses are articulated through a particular use of different language levels. On the lexicon and grammar level, a set of recurring vocabulary asserts implicit arguments – English is linear, logical, rational, as well as flexible and generously hospital, its grammatical simplicity makes it efficient, hence suitable for business, progress and scientific knowledge (Pennycook 1998) – all of which qualify English in indirect positive comparison to *other* less adequate languages which, in a linguistic natural selection of the fittest, have in some cases, we are made to notice, even become extinct (Svartvik & Leech 2006). Functional linguists have defined such dense intermingling of the lexico-grammar and the semantics-discourse levels as 'grammatical metaphor', i.e. a mechanism whereby figurative meanings disguise themselves under simple linear references (Martin & Rose 2008: 17-20, 38-44). As a matter of fact, language users are made to stand on a shifting seismic ground, where a contingent context of situation is also, mostly unknowingly, a far more connoted and complex context of culture whose meanings resonate as a powerful yet invisible discourse that assigns roles and positions, no matter if the circumscribed situation would not require it.

If such figurative tension across the language levels becomes a way by which English conveys further messages than it seems to be doing ordinarily, and is made to invisibly render hierarchical worldviews, this mechanism also works on a far larger and more sophisticated scale, to maintain the status quo in the way culture, knowledge and education are made to relate to the organization of society and the management of natural, economic and human resources. In a larger inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural scenario, a global language like English works across contexts of cultures through the use of ad hoc micro-languages and specialised registers that regulate the way reality is translated into

knowledge and, further, into the ways by which such knowledge needs to be appropriately addressed through specialised jargon, genres and subgenres. Language articulates meanings at several removes from sensual reality, and it is access to such codification – dependent on social positions granting access to the various ranks of expertise in the education system – that will in turn regulate the impact upon nature, culture and the society.

This is how the colonised world, for one, was translated into distinct yet interwoven academic fields and genres of discourse. Filtered through specialised jargons and text-types, real people, cultures and languages were turned into scientific subjects, defined, described, processed, with no chance of effective replication, unless, as it would happen, users took control of the established access codes. The colonised world became the place where to do fieldwork, gather data, categorize human beings by race and religion, and draw scientific conclusions that justified territorial management and interventions for the benefit of the European economies, a complex mechanism at work in the single observer and expert, a power stored in the inconsequential linguist or biologist travelling around the colonies. Early in the 20th century, Said reminds us, the world was divided between those who ordered knowledge through academic research and those who were but numbers and raw material to be decoded and showcased (Said 1993: 198-203).

'After' such a globalised scenario, a liberating language competence cannot but be based on the learning of how to use this over-intrinsic transcultural dialectics and its translational complexity, a hybridised notion and use of English that has been recently called 'globalectics', whose cultural background and whose centre is the postcolonial world at large conceived of as plurilingual and pluricentric (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 2012).

Into Global English Darkness

A good blend of English and colonial discourse is observable in current

textbooks of Global English or Varieties of English, manuals that typically range from history to geography, to cultural and language studies, with the aim of explaining the world-scale diffusion of the language in linguistic objective terms. It is a sub-field of variational or contact linguistics not to be confused with the antagonist approach of the Kachruvian World-English studies, which, however, in spite of crucial contribution to validate the acculturated Englishes developed in the ex-colonies, has seen its innovative principles be re-appropriated by mainstream linguistics, in consequence of both its very limiting descriptive analyses stopping short at syntax level (Mahboob & Szene 2010), and of its restricted involvement with literature and critique.

The 'grading exercise' that I am about to introduce is based on an introductory section of Schneider's textbook *English Around the World*, entitled "English, Both Globalising and Nativising" (Schneider 2011: 2-5), directed to an audience of future students of linguistics and generally of English. 'Objectivity' is claimed through recourse to technical linguistics terms and the use of specialised procedural genres typical of the sciences, which make the drawn relations appear factual and indisputable. While the mentor, the expert linguist, uses *reports and explanations* of authentic material (by which linguists usually mean 'not literature'), he also invites students to learn how to work likewise by using *procedures* and *procedural recounts* for gathering their information to be then scientifically delivered (Martin & Rose 2008: 142-229). Clearly, the Global English manual will provide technical knowledge while also furthering it by forming general adepts and future experts to function in respective ranks of the society.

Schneider's text, however, I have integrated with scattered images from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in order to provide a useful interlocutor for its hidden colonial discourse. In doing so, I'm also referring to Said's view of the novel's 'double vision' (Said 1993: 24-35) which represents, Said explains, both the indisputable facts of colonialism in Africa and its unsettling and ambiguous

foundations as conveyed by the novel's structure in which British colonial Africa is set and framed within Marlow's narration, with all its references to the role that language has played in keeping colonialism going, hence laying bare that such harm and exploitation are *related* to and occur through the uses of English.

To start with we have a text whose linguist-narrator, with his wide and moral vision, is that of a *Buddha* providing the status of English in the world and neatly positioning his audience in it: one the one hand, the guru and his students, all *in the same boat*, sharing the one form of normal English; on the other, unspecified people living *somewhere in the rest of the world* who speak 'odd', 'strange', 'different' Englishes whose distortions – should one venture to stay among them for a long time – may become contaminating.

Have you been **abroad**? Do you travel a lot? Then you know **what** I'm talking about. **Wherever** you go on this globe, mostly there's something **odd** about the way English is used: **strange** words, familiar words pronounced **differently**, sentences built in **odd** ways. Well, if you stay **there**, **wherever** that is, you may pick up some of these features and sound like a **native**. What this teaches us is that English is no longer just "one language"; **it comes in different shapes and sizes**, as it were, so that linguists talk of **different "Englishes**" (Schneider 2011: 2, all emphasis added).

These weird Englishes are yet soon revealed to be those used in ex-colonial countries, where they are divided into three main categories, all of which are essentially different from the one Standard used or learnt in the West: *there*, English may be used as a neutral *lingua franca* for mere practical use; or, more rarely, it may get *nativized* in case people have made it 'their own' by either using it alongside local languages or by having replaced their languages altogether. Of note here is the ambiguous phrase 'made it

their own', by which 'language appropriation' as a positive key-term in postcolonial studies is re-adumbrated with the literal sense of 'illegitimate action'. Schneider's categorization of types of Englishes is all along accompanied by cunning expressions of surprise, of great wonder, whose aim is to estrange the European student from the idea that such translingual practices are the norm and not the exception in today's globalised world and that it is not English which is either 'globalising' or 'nativizing' the world but the other way round: it is the hybrid nature of societies where several languages are used alongside English that are pluralising and *grading*, mixing, English, determining the new established standard forms it has taken in over at least half a century.

> No doubt English is truly the leading language today. It is used in SURPRISINGLY many countries, almost always as the mediator language (a lingua franca) by *people who have different mother tongues*, as *in many developing countries* people perceive it as the primary gateway to better jobs and incomes. At the same time, HOWEVER, *English has become localized and indigenized*, as people enjoy using it *in 'their own' way*, a dialect to express regional pride. FURTHERMORE, in Asia and Africa, where English was introduced just one or two centuries ago, there are children who grow up speaking English as their first language. Some are not even able to speak the indigenous language of their parents anymore. ISN'T THIS AN AMAZING PHENOMENON? (Schneider 2011: 2, all emphasis added).

As striking in Schneider's narration is the dismissal of colonial history altogether, with the consequence that no connection can be made between postcolonial countries and Europe; hence no 'interwoven map of cultural interactions, no intertwined and overlapping histories and territories' out of which only the reality of English could emerge as a hybrid language in a global contact zone.

ONE REALLY INTERESTING ASPECT about all this is that this indigenization and nativization process of English in former colonies in the British Empire, is a product of a very recent past and not of colonial heritage. Again, THIS SHOULD COME AS A SURPRISE TO AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER. English was the language of the colonial power, the settlers and rulers sometimes perceived as the oppressors. But, once they were gone, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, English was embraced, made "our own" (Schneider 2011: 3).

Like a new Marlow finding the illuminating presence of the English seafaring book in the very heart of the African darkness, Schneider points out his own manual of global English whose rational quality and practical function are emphasized.

This book describes this process of the global spread of English. My strategy is that of **"zooming in"** from the general to the specific: I combine a **general survey with a closer look** to showcase a typical **instantiation** of English in use in a given context. I assume no prior familiarity with any of these issues or regions and assuming that you, my readership, will comprise both linguistics students and not, I will offer some **technical terms** but will **explain** them and **indicate** what you need to pay attention to (Schneider 2011: 3, all emphasis added).

Schneider represents his approach to English as that of an advanced camera able to capture reality both in general, universal, scope and in close detail. It's a disquieting twofold perspective that reminds one of the overall invigilating gaze of the panopticon as representative of the working mechanisms of colonial discourse at its apex, with subjects in check having interiorized the watcher and, therefore, the degrees of variation, of transgression, allowed (Pennycook 1994). The title of Schneider's introductory passage, "English, both globalizing and

nativizing", (Schneider 2011: 2) uncannily refers to a similar checking action, as English is indirectly compared to a towering surveillance tool which both rules and determines the forms that English may take up as well as those that it has illegitimately made to acquire and which are kept under control.

Unsurprisingly, the last paragraph leads us to know that, after all, this is knowledge that students already possess, which they naturally gather in their daily experience of its standard forms alongside the odd uses they may come across; all they need to learn is how to articulate such common sense into technical terms, which will give them access into the consolidated vision of linguists, as some meanings, Conrad's novel explains, do not lie in the kernel but in the cracked shell, in the way they are expressed.

> IF THIS SOUNDS A LITTLE ABSTRACT AND ALIEN TO YOU – LET ME ASSURE YOU IT ISN'T, REALLY. Whenever we talk **this machinery** works inside us. We **assess** what we hear – not only the meaning, the message, but the way it is encoded. And the details of this encoding (one's accent, for instance) signal quite a lot to us in terms of background, status, age, etc. To each new communicative situation we bring our **accumulated familiarity** with different ways of talking. And we not only listen explicitly, but **we also read between the lines, as it were.** Frequently what we do as linguists is no more than spelling out **what we "know" anyhow**. This also means we need to develop methods and "theories" to collect data **objectively**, to systematize our observations, to make our claims convincing to others (what we could call "proving our theory") (Schneider 2011: 3, all emphasis added).

Conclusions

Overall, a student embarking on a similar exercise would learn, with Said, that "a nativist cultural tradition that pretends to authenticity and priority is but fundamentalist ideology" (Said 2004: 47). That student will acquire a view of English learning that includes its worldly strata, which will make living in today's

world a more critical and engaging experience, as one sees that language is never neutral and that as English language learners and users "our social and cultural fate is already defined in it" (Said 2004: 29). Furthermore, that student will see that English may be a tool that enables one's way through its thick and alienating forest, where one can learn to exert basic rights to understanding, reformulation, discussion, self-expression, and that in such a role language is "the basic material […] the place where we can most effectively register our dissent" (Said 2004: 49). That student will know that there can be two stages in this journey: understanding, the voluntary penetration of words, a close reading that proceeds philologically, literally through a love of words (Said 2004: 58), by which like new disenchanted naturalists we try to understand the meanings of words by themselves, in context and in their constant noisy association with other apparently distant words, fighting the peace of the pre-packed style and preferring "a deliberate process of reflection and research" (Said 2004: 74), in fact a "technique of trouble" (Said 2004: 77). This is where reception gives way to resistance and negotiation between what language offers and what we understand and know about it on the basis of our linguistic and cultural experiences, which would introduce new assumptions, new references that would contribute to English and change it, to a degree. Thus equipped, one is in the position of getting hold of those rivets that Marlow never received, as without the chance of joining words to meanings we won't be able to navigate today's era, where a simplistic command of English and an essentialist rudimentary compass can no longer help, especially so, as soon as the cultural paradigm shift, long advocated by Said, becomes one with the linguistic shift theorised by contemporary and as emancipated linguists.

For now, as one awaits change, our little exercise may provide a minimal positive as well as practical reply to the challenging question recently asked by Spivak who, by way of dealing with the 'burden of English' in postcolonial countries, briefly lingers on the sliding crossways where English literatures and

language dovetail, yet leaves the possibilities lying in that very junction unexplored: how can we provide a critical aesthetic education in a globalised era where students have commodified English – and vice versa – and students are not interested in exploring contents, but rather in 'using' the language in a call center? (Spivak 2012: 35-56).

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In Times of Peace. Negotiating the Orient in *Tokyo Year Zero* by David Peace

Abstract I: Conceived as the first novel in a trilogy, *Tokyo Year Zero* (2007) portrays Japan in 1946, defeated by the Allies and invaded by the American occupying forces. The investigation concerning the murders of four prostitutes develops on this backdrop describing a nation that has willingly decided to lose its identity. In this light, my work here revises the notion of empire and the way it has changed in recent years, considering how Said's reflections on the idea of the Orient have developed so far and are remoulded in the narrative of David Peace.

Abstract II: Concepito come il primo romanzo di una trilogia, *Tokyo Year Zero* (2007) è ambientato nel Giappone del 1946, sconfitto dagli alleati e invaso dalle forze di occupazione americane. L'indagine sull'omicidio di quattro prostitute si siviluppa sullo sfondo di una nazione che ha deliberatamente deciso di perdere la sua identità. In questa prospettiva, il mio lavoro riesamina il concetto di impero, considerando il modo in cui le riflessioni di Said sulla nozione di Oriente vengono rimodellate nel romanzo di David Peace.

"Half of it Japanese. Half of it Foreign. All of it Illegal"

> "Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiate and unmonolithic" (Said 1994: XXV).

In this 1992 statement, drawn from his Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism*,

Edward Said implies the need of negotiation in the process of making contact with the Other, also reminding us of the loss of purity that this contact unavoidably determines. What we should bear in mind when reflecting on this issue is that in most cases, and certainly for what concerns the notion of the Orient, negotiation has been basically concerned with the struggle towards a mediation between the 'White Man''s previously acquired notion of the Other and the conflicting feelings raised in the 'White Man' while approaching the 'Other'. What the latter really was in her/himself, why she/he was pretending to be or acting as a white man, under which circumstances she/he was proving ready to strike back and for which reasons she/he decided instead to suffer subjection, all of this was never at stake until, basically, the 9/11 terrorist attack. After more or less thirty years, negotiation continues to be the primary grounding of the relationship to what is different, but a much stronger hint at the 'difference of the Other' has recently introduced new variables in the process of shaping one's own identity, wherever one's loyalties are based.

In 1993, Said referred to the American Empire stating that "The United States is no ordinary large country. The United States is the last superpower, an enormously influential, frequently interventionary power nearly everywhere in the world" (Said 1994: 54). In terms of historical development, American policies started being openly imperialist – and need to be defined as such – precisely when they became involved in World War II (Said 1994: 55). As a consequence, from then onwards, the notion of Orient itself has been potently reshaped by America's military as well as cultural power, even when the pressure of this power has not resulted in an overtly imperialistic policy or when the details of specific oppression have not been made public because they belong to the twilight land of international diplomacy. Secrets, mostly in times of war, have bred American supremacy, shelving any idea of a mission aimed at bringing peace and ultimately switching the tools and methods of empire from outright repression to slow and ineluctable disempowering. More recently, this process

seems to have developed in such a way as to revise the stereotypical interaction between the victim and the torturer to produce a twin remoulding of the two profiles: a new, highly mobile paradigm of 'Oriental evil' has developed hand in hand with a refurbished version of the American hero. We will reflect on this process considering the way in which it is posited and articulated in David Peace's still unfinished crime trilogy about Tokyo in the aftermath of the atomic bombing.

Openly enough, Peace intends to focus on what he considers as a key-event in the growth of American imperial power in a phase when the switch from the methods of military invasion to the smoother and more effective tools of economic hegemony was starting to become apparent. He also seems interested in highlighting a relatively unreported though crucial aspect of the historical process following Hirohito's defeat soon after Hiroshima and Nagasaki's bombing. What is not always made clear when reflecting on this specific contingency is a very simple and often forgotten awareness: after August 15, 1946, we witness the dramatic consequences of the clash between two empires, one of them – the Western – winning, while the other – standing for the Orient – tries to cope with the most radical, absolute and unexpected defeat that can be imagined. Coherently with his usual method, Peace gathers plenty of documentation before starting to write: as ever, his work is deeply rooted in real events, relentlessly studied and profoundly understood before being retold in fiction. In *Tokyo Year Zero*, as happened in *The Red Riding Quartet,* the plot relies on a real event: a criminal case of murdered prostitutes that Peace, apparently, happened to read in an old newspaper article (Adams 2007). This minor criminal investigation proved strong enough to be developed as the guideline for a most effective historical reconstruction. Documents, interviews, texts and materials allow Peace to pinpoint the facts of the American occupation of defeated Japan. These facts are soon made into the fiction of Detective Minami, who has lost his name, his identity, his family and, soon

enough, himself, too.

What is particular about fiction writing, and what sets it apart from essay writing, is that it openly selects a specific point of view, which, in Peace's *Tokyo Trilogy*, takes us back to what may be defined as a dual belonging. Though English born, David Peace (born 1967) has been living in Japan for almost twenty years now. In 2011, when participating as a guest writer at the Belfast Book Fair and after coming back to Yorkshire with his family and spending a few years writing and teaching there, he revealed that he had decided to go back to Japan, in the aftermath of the tsunami: whatever the reasons for this reverse homecoming, they probably say something about how and where Peace's loyalties lie, even admitting that we may still speak of such a thing as national belonging today. In any case and on account of his choices about where to live and work, David Peace must be familiar with the feeling of in-betweenness that Homi Bhabha defines as the "complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha 1994: 2). The dynamic re-articulation of identity that is very much the essence of human existence today – that same nomadic process that Braidotti acknowledges, in her latest essay, as the only possible way to belonging (Braidotti 2006: 8-9) – requires the endless negotiation of one's own tradition and inheritance and of course challenges the primary grounding of Western epistemology, revising the once sharply posited dichotomy between the pretended universality of the ethical dimension and the all-too-human need for a highly localized (national, ethic, familiar) belonging. Moving between the "old Europe" and his newly acquired eastern loyalties, sort of suspended between two cultures and two worlds, David Peace is himself a sort of postcolonial subject, sited and re-sited in space and time (Dirlik 1994: 336) and therefore sporting a brand-new gaze that is probably one of the most interesting features of his narrative.

Though also apparent in his crime series set in Yorkshire as well as in his

'football stories' (1), the feeling of being half of something only comes to the foreground in the Tokyo novels. The first of them, *Tokyo Year Zero,* is in fact introduced by a quotation from *A Fool's Life*, by Akutagawa Yunosuke (1927). The few lines titled "Defeat", which serve as an epigraph, mention a character who "lived in this half-light" (Peace 2007: 0). This reference to the grey area that marks personal and collective uncertainty in times of hardship effectively combines, to their mutual advantage, the Western and Eastern notions of suspension and in-betweenness that are the main concern of Peace's *Weltanschauung,* freeing them from their national and, so to speak, geographic determinations and making them into universal feelings, to be located in time (i.e. our contemporary condition) rather than in space (i.e. one's positioning as a colonial power or as a colonized people).

At the same time, Peace's concern lies in a highly specific and intensely historicized condition, namely that of Japan under the American occupation. On this issue and in trying to develop his own representation of this contingency, Peace seems to keep a full, unrelenting awareness that Said's "dynamic exchange" – the process aimed at leading individual authors to recolonize the intellectual and imaginary territory previously shaped by three great empires (Said 1978: 14-15) – is still at work today. In *Tokyo Year Zero* as well as in its sequel *Occupied City,* Japan is seen while redefining its own new identity and facing – or better, 'suffering' the oppression of – one of those empires, and not enjoying it. In Peace's representation, the occupation affects the Japanese community at several levels. It globally results in a shared condition of passivity and in an equally strong feeling of anxiety, the two of them combined with the inability to cope with a kind of subalternity never experienced before and with the related need to reposition oneself in a space that has suddenly become unfamiliar.

The issue of collective oppression is then replicated in the psychology of the protagonist, Detective Minami, a man of uncertain identity and even more uncertain loyalties, whose life is haunted by the feeling that "No one is who they

seem" (Peace 2007: 185-186). Even the investigation seems to get to no result, and the person who is held responsible is probably not guilty, but unable to free himself from his charges (2). Eventually, though some young prostitutes are cruelly murdered, there seems to be no way to do justice to them.

This very rough outline of *Tokyo Year Zero* hardly gives reasons for the radical in-betweenness portrayed in the 'half light' of the story. We will try to show how the main interest of Peace's work resides in the way it explores several levels of thematic transitionality (historical, psychological, identitarian, investigative and legal), not only providing a clear-cut if sorrowful portrait of meaningless violence but also shaping this portrait through stylistic tools and devices that are far from familiar in crime fiction and that reproduce that same in-betweenness and obsessive search for identity that mark the thematic level of his novels. The homogeneous surface of style appears disrupted and fragmented, so as to effectively respond to a setting – fictional as well as historical – crowded with slippery characters, revealing unexpected complexities and marking themselves as performative entities involved in the process that we call history. A very definite, and quite challenging, choice of style reinforces Peace's thematic options: what we may call the rhythm of words represents the site where diverging voices interlace, an in-between space where many differences combine in a concerto. The way in which they outline a new notion of "the fact of empire" (Said 1978: 14) is my focus here.

Level 1: History and the Fact of Empire

Collective history is in fact the first level of my analysis. The US occupation – symbolically marked as the moment when the familiar rules do not work any longer and the new ones are not yet operational – smoothly relates to the twin notions of in-betweennnes and half-light. In this respect, the first interesting aspect of Peace's novel is the double-reading of what Said defines "the fact of empire". In Peace, the notion of imperial power becomes, so to speak, plural,

and is inflected as both Western and Eastern. While trying to provide a reliable representation of the American occupation after the Japanese defeat, *Tokyo Year Zero* also articulates the portrayal of an Eastern empire crumbling while struggling to survive a clash that is at the same time military and cultural. It is actually impossible to state whom Peace loyalties lie with, maybe because the novelist is not interested in taking sides. More importantly, his narrative, here as everywhere else, mostly deals with the working of power, rendered in the foucaultian shape of a chain: rather than developing, so to speak, in a line from the torturer to the victim, it circulates, switching from occupiers to occupied and back, and provoking an abrupt revision of the symbolic universe the Japanese society used to be based on (Foucault 1982: 419).

The orderly though slow process through which modern Japan is created, out of the ashes of the defeated empire, is narrated by Peace – a Westerner performing as a Japanese – through a story of murdered prostitutes and starting from the day when the empire is forced to surrender. The official rite marking the beginning of a new political phase may in fact be identified in the radio broadcast of Hirohito's surrender speech in the wake of the latest provisions of peace. Making his decision, and communicating it to his subjects, is the act that actually puts an end to the history of the Japanese empire:

> After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions in our Empire today, We have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure… We have ordered Our government to communicate to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union that Our Empire accepts the provisions of their Joint Declaration… (Peace 2007: 21).

While acknowledging Japan's defeat and clearly naming the victorious powers, Hirohito still adopts the forms and modalities of the imperial rhetoric, implicitly

suggesting that the maintenance of elaborate everyday formalities and ceremonies may be an effective survival strategy (Sorrentino 2007). Quite openly, the provisional shelter provided by a set of tested social formulas may reduce the impact of an event suddenly perceived as equivalent to the end of the world. Voicing an intense sense of loss, the excerpts from Hirohito's speech, in the first pages of the novel, create the atmosphere of something ineluctable that simply has to be accepted:

> Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in the ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization. Such being the case, how are We to save the millions of Our subjects, or to atone Ourselves before the hallowed spirits of Our Imperial Ancestors? (Peace 2007: 22).

Pragmatically and symbolically, the Emperor gives in, withdrawing his protection by the mere admission that the empire does not exist any longer. The community appears scattered and dazed by the lack of directions; everybody is living in fear of punishment and purges, and reacts by removing any sense of belonging, and also abandoning individual as well as collective identity.

> The Japanese nation is under siege both from the 'victors' and from Formosans, Koreans and Chinese seeking retribution. The American occupying forces are conducting purges to root out war criminals. In the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, everyone has changed identity to avoid recrimination. The slogans on the Tokyo station walls, parroted by senior officers – 'Now is not a time to forget our obligations, they are who we are' (Peace 2007: 87).

The empty formality of the official rites is echoed in an urban landscape of destruction and desolation. Nothing works. Nobody is clear about what he or

she should do to escape the purges. In a dilapidated site of ruins, the lurking fear of infection is everywhere and expands from the sharply physical and ever-present struggle against parasites (lice are impossible to eradicate) to the symbolic viral spread of American power and rules. The repeated mantra that "it is time to reveal the true essence of the nation" (Peace 2007: 245) does not seem to produce any rebirth. On the contrary, it removes the hope of going back to imperial power, defied and erased by the new hierarchy of power: "The Capital City of Showa Dead, the Losers on their hands and knees, the Victors in their trucks and jeeps" (Peace 2007: 30).

The previously mentioned "True essence" is therefore to be intended as an empty phrase, marking the end of a better and more balanced condition, where the members of the community were cradled and protected by safe and shared rules. Tokyo is made into the icon of a definite moment in time: "The fifteenth day of the eighth month of the twentieth year of Shōwa" (August 15, 1946) becomes, in fact, Tokyo Year 0. The widely circulated sense of apocalypse is intensely refracted from the oppressed community into the architecture of space (and vice versa) producing the image of a *polis* that appears architecturally as well as socially destroyed:

> The sirens and the warnings all through the night; Tokyo hot and dark; hidden and cowed; night and day, rumors of new weapons, fears of new bombs; first Hiroshima, then Nagasaki, next is Tokyo… Bombs that mean the end of Japan, the end of the world… (Peace 2007: 3-4)

A key-issue here is the emblematic relevance given to an urban landscape that translates the meaning of defeat into a topography of desperation and hopelessness. The effective representation of dilapidated urban sites, which in itself is not unusual in Peace, reaches its climax in the Tokyo novels, in an epic narration following the tormented path along which both the individuals and the community are led to devise new forms of identity. Again, we are brought

back to Said and to one of his statements on contemporary fiction, where "the novel form and the new historical narrative become pre-eminent, and in which the importance of subjectivity to historical time takes firm hold" (Said 1994: 58). However, Peace adds something more. He does not simply frame the subject within a highly specific historical time, but goes a way beyond combining different kinds of subjects, and matching high and low, male and female, rich and poor, Japanese and American in unusual patterns that dissolve the Western habit of dichotomic thinking. What is emphasized instead is a strong feeling of transitionality producing both a physical/urban uncertainty and a symbolic instability. The potentially black-and-white opposition of good and evil fades to a grey area, a borderland, where the characters move, hopelessly trying to resist their fate, which amounts to nothing more than endless physical and/or psychological violation. While investigating what Stallybrass defines as "the division of the social into high and low, the polite and the vulgar" (Stallybrass & White 1986: 191), he also tries to map out the gradual passing from the previous 'social purity' (when the Japanese empire was still in place) and the impending 'hybridization' brought about by its defeat. Meaningfully enough, this grey area is crowded with grotesque bodies replacing the 'civilized' ones, impacting on identity and determining a redefinition of the laws and rules that were previously internalized as the guarantee of social living (Stallybrass & White 1986: 191).

As a consequence, the sense of in-betweenness is overwhelming everywhere in the novel and acquires both a symbolic and physical connotation: "Half of it Japanese. Half of it foreign. All of it illegal. But there are no police here. No Victors. No Occupiers" (Peace 2007: 42). The pervasive sense of the spreading of an infection results in the weakening of the social organism and the destruction of any form of civilized interaction. The inability to distinguish the winners from the victims mostly resides in their sharing the same dilapidated space, eating the same food, suffering the same weather and feeling the same nostalgia for a homeland which is either too far away or no longer existing. A

new and newly cohesive Japanese identity is obviously still in the making, but the path is traced and it has to go through the land of political and cultural anarchy: "Here there is only one law; buy or be bought. Sell or be sold; this is where the cannibals come" (Peace 2007: 42). And when they come, they find Inspector Minami waiting for them.

Level 2: Postimperial Identity as a Process

The first pages of *Tokyo Year Zero* are constructed as a sort of double beginning. Challenging his reader in his usual way, Peace opens his novel by introducing two narrative threads at once – one on the left page and one on the right – that appear both stylistically and visually diversified. Fonts and formats as well as line-spacing are different. The left page articulates a sort of hypnotic stream of consciousness (Adams 2007), with sections emphasized through the use of bold and italics; there is no narration, but simply a flow of unhindered feelings and thoughts. An unknown I-narrator introduces himself right at the beginning of the page ("I lie among the corpses") and takes his leave at the end ("I lie among corpses and I listen"), closing the passage full circle. The right page, instead, develops the action in the shape of a traditional story. Fragments of italicized interpolations suggest something of a haunted, self-lacerating interior monologue; nevertheless the reader is given a place, a time, and a protagonist. Minami, whose name has recently been changed to hide his previous history and reshuffle the pattern of his identity, is shown as an example of the *anomia* imposed by the condition of being a defeated and occupied country. His condition is by no means unusual. Quite the opposite.

> The young man stares at the doughnut and nods his head.
> 'Got a wife waiting for you?' she asks. 'Your mother?'
> The young man looks up from the plate now and says, 'They think I died honourably in battle three years ago. They received a citation from the Mayor of Tokyo which said Private Noma would forever be remembered

and may his soul rest in peace. They were given a small white casket in which the ashes of my body had been brought back to Japan. They deposited the casket in our local temple. They placed a framed picture of me in my uniform on the family *butsudan*. They lit incense for me, offered white rice and sake …

I don't want to remember. I don't want to remember …

'They wouldn't look at my face. They said Noma is dead …'

But here in the half-light, I can't forget …

'They wouldn't look at my feet …'

They are punishing us all …

'They said I am a ghost …'

Warning us all …

No one is who they seem (Peace 2007: 185-186).

And this is the high point in the building of the main character, that is in fact the voice narrating the story: Detective Minami of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police has been driven crazy by nothing being as it seems (Adams 2007). His private and public life is haunted by a set of meaningless oppositions, whose meaning has got lost together with the imperial identity:

Democracy is good. Democracy is bad. *My mouth is dry*. The aggressor is the victim. The victim is the aggressor. *My stomach aches*. The winners are the losers. The losers are the winners... (Peace 2007: 368).

Being a detective, Minami is described while involved in an investigation. The day Japan accepts the imposed conditions of defeat is also the day when the body of a young geisha is found in Shiba Park. The case is a real one (Adams 2007), but Peace rewrites its contingencies, making them symbolic of the crumbling of the whole imperial universe. So, on August 15, 1946, the protagonist is summoned to an air raid shelter where the woman's body has been discovered. Apparently, the body is found on naval property and therefore the

case should be dealt with by the military police. When a scapegoat is easily found – an elderly Korean who is not plausible as a killer but very convenient as a solution for the killing – the case should be closed (Sorrentino 2007). Refusing to close it is the *act/fact* determining Minami's slow descent into the hell of global uncertainty, both personal and professional.

From the structural point of view, Minami is more than a character. He is also the device collating the narrative and providing a key to it. This function is coherent with the usual role of central characters – namely detectives – in serialized crime fiction, though Peace – as we have said - often diverges from the conventional frame of this subgenre (3). At the same time, Minami is also unique in the way he is articulated. He is not the typical cop; he breaks more rules than he keeps, and his thoughts aren't organized at all. Starving, lice-infested, plagued by the ceaseless heat and dressed in rags, he's troubled by a drug habit, a neglected family, a mistress who obsesses him, an uneasy relationship with the local crime boss, treacherous subordinates, impatient superiors and disturbing memories of wartime atrocities in which he may have participated (Sorrentino 2007). He thinks in dichotomies that appear to him totally devoid of meaning and that soon develop into a sort of quickfire paranoia.

> *I pick up the razor*. Nobody knows my name. Everybody knows my name. *I open up the razor*. Nobody cares. Everybody cares. *I untie the kimono*. The day is night. The night is day. *The yellow and dark-blue striped kimono*. Black is white. White is black. *It falls open*. The men are the women. The women are the men. *The razor in my right hand*. The brave are the frightened. The frightened are the brave. *I lower my right hand*. The strong are the weak. The weak are the strong. *I lower the razor*. The good are the bad. The bad are the good. *The blade touches my skin*. Communists should be set free. Communists should be locked up. *I lift up my cock with my left hand*. Strikes are legal. Strikes are

illegal. *The blade is cold*. Democracy is good. Democracy is bad. *My
mouth is dry*. The aggressor is the victim. The victim is the aggressor. *My
stomach aches*. The winners are the losers. The losers are the winners.
My heart aches. Japan lost the war. Japan won the war. *I start to cut*.
The living are the dead –
I cut and I cut and I cut and I cut and I cut...
Until the dead are the living. *I cut*... *I am one of the survivors!*
(Peace 2007: 368).

As we know, the first and primary grounding of Western epistemology is the
notion of a founding duality, producing an endless set of related dichotomies
(Bhabha 1984: 2). The character that Peace is introducing here articulates his
own provocative version of the Western duality. Being a Japanese born and
bred, Minami does not remove the dichotomies, quite the opposite. He feeds
them, at the same time making them totally devoid of meaning. His identity,
metonymically erased through the denial of his own name, is what nobody
knows but everybody knows, and it makes no difference whether he is good or
bad, either as a policeman or as a husband, father and lover.

Peace proves particularly effective in assuming the voice of Detective
Minami, at times also using his language and interspersing the narrative with
Japanese words. The working of Minami's psychology also reflects a broader
aspect of Peace's imagination that tends to build up by fragments, multiplying
as the plot goes on. Eventually, they produce the impression of a universe that is
at the same time entropic and intensely disseminated. Peace uses truncated
subject, verb, object sentences in repetitive rhythms to establish the
"claustrophobia of extreme states of mind" (Adams 2007). The "demotic
rhythms" (Adams 2007) marking his poetic prose amount to a highly original
narrative voice, that is unmistakable, and always there, whether he tells of the
Yorkshire Ripper, the Miner's Strike, Manchester United or the end of Japanese
empire. From the narrative point of view, the resulting effect owes little to

Raymond Chandler or James Ellroy: Peace's masters are rather F. Dostoyevsky, W. Burroughs and K. Acker, to whom the French practitioners of the *nouveau roman* are to be added, for what concerns the way in which the conventions of American detective fiction are borrowed by experimental narrative so as to draw the reader into the ratiocinative process (Sorrentino 2007).

> *Their clothes are almost rags, half of them have no shoes...*
> 'This is a bad place to buy anything, a terrible place...'
> *They are weighted down and they are sweating...*
> 'These farmers have us where they want us...'
> *..The weight of the bundles on their backs*
> 'They won't take money, only goods...' *Dirty towels tied around their faces.*
> 'They're getting choosier by the day...'
> *Or old yellowcaps on their heads...*
> 'Used to be just fabrics or cloth...'
> *The weaker ones slowing down...* '
> Now only jewellery will do...'
> *Falling behind the others...*
> 'Kimonos or shoes...'
> *Resting already...*
> 'It'll be much better in autumn,' they convince themselves –
> But it's not autumn yet, the tips of the branches still green –
> The persimmons on the trees still to fatten and brighten –
> *To ripen, to fall and to splatter* (Peace 2007: 305).

The writing does not only exist in terms of the semantics built through words, but also as a shape, a graphic and visual work of art, whose physical consistence has to be exploited.

> *Does he stand behind you in the queue for tickets at Shibuya?*

'No bones missing', I agree. 'But where were her clothes?'

Does he befriend you with tales of farmers and cheap rice?

Her brown *monpe* trousers and her pale yellow blouse –

Do you go to Asakusa? Then the train to Kanasaki...?

Her sandals, her socks and her underwear, all near –

This is the way, he says. This is the way, he says...

Here among these trees, among these branches –

He walks behind you. He walks behind you...

To the neatly chopped logs piled over there –

His hair stretched tight against his scalp

Through these trees and these branches –

But it's not the way. Never the way...

On my hands and on my knees –

His skin tight against his skull...

I'm lifting up log after log –

He looms and he leers...

Looking for her clothes –

Kodaira, Kodaira...

Under log after log –

Looms and leers...

This one last log –

Here, here... (Peace 2007: 317).

The stylistic approach, in a way, combines with the thematic complexities, reinforcing the sense of a whole epoch ending together with the Japanese empire. In this context, finding out the killer – soon nicknamed the Japanese Ripper, in another example of Western mythical colonization – becomes irrelevant.

While pursuing his theory, Minami gradually discovers that no one is interested in solving the murders (in fact, the case file has gone missing), and he also develops his investigation into a quest made up of equal parts of honor,

duty and venality, a quest that affords him a clear and unwanted view deep into the catacombs of police corruption, the shadier side of affairs in the emerging "new Japan" and his own crumbling mental state (Sorrentino 2007).

In the ruins of the nuclear bombing, in the interstices of these torn and wounded *epistemes* where the rules of justice are blurred and betrayed, the notions of right and wrong disappear to be replaced by the elementary law of survival.

If, as Said maintains and drawing towards a conclusion, representations have purposes, what sort of consequence emerges from this representation of a defeated Orient through Western eyes? Without any doubt, this "formed" and "deformed" Orient is quite distinct from the one we are used to. The same goes, however, for the Westerner, who, deterritorialized and destabilized, still tries to position her/himself as our brand-new postcolonial subject. In the same way as the Orient was shaped by Europe out of a more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called "the East" (Said 1978: 273), the West was silently shaped by many different Eastern gazes out of a geographical region called the West. The Japanese imperial identity was not ready to face the US kind of Occident/West. And Peace shows the process through which they struggle not to be absorbed by something they find they by no means know.

NOTES

1. We are referring to the four novels included in the so called *Red Riding Quartet* – *1974* (1999), *1977* (2000), *1980* (2001) and *1983* (2002) – and to the two novels devoted to famous profiles in UK football history: *The Damned United* (2006) and the very recent *Red or Dead* (2013).

2. Kodairo Yoshio, who confessed to killing the four young victims, was executed at the Miyagi Prison on October, 5, 1949.

3. In the above-mentioned *Red Riding Quartet*, the traditional device of the serialized protagonist is discarded in favour of a more risky and less formalized

cohesion among the four novels, built on a shared political and social atmosphere.

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Shifting Statuses and Lasting Codes in Janice Kulyk Keefer's *The Green Library*

Abstract I: In most of her writings, mainly in the novel *The Green Library* (1996), the Ukrainian-Canadian writer Janice Kulyk Keefer offers what can be seen as a collection of case-studies of the forming, dissolving and re-forming in colonial and postcolonial history, of patterns of class belonging and class perception. By dissecting the concept of class into its dynamic components, Kulyk Keefer shows how movements and changes due to the passing of time, the forming of new nations and the massive migration from country to country disclose deeply embedded, albeit partly unconscious, elements of thorny and even dangerous class images.

Abstract II: Nella maggior parte delle sue opere, soprattutto nel romanzo *The Green Library* (1996), la scrittrice ucraino-canadese Janice Kulyk Keefer presenta una collezione di esempi del formarsi, dissolversi e riformarsi nella storia coloniale e postcoloniale di modelli di appartenenza, di percezione e auto-percezione di classe. Esaminando il concetto di classe nelle sue componenti dinamiche, Kulyk Keefer mostra come i mutamenti dovuti al passare del tempo, al formarsi di nuovi stati e alla massiccia migrazione da paese a paese, rivelino elementi profondamente radicati, se pure in parte inconsci, di un difficile e persino pericoloso immaginario di classe.

> We can perceive this truth on the political map of the contemporary world. For surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than

ever before in history, most of them as accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts.

(Said 1994: 402)

The logic of Marxian class theory, however widespread and interpreted, was not enough in the last century and it is certainly not enough today to investigate or even describe the forming of new class hierarchies and their fractured and mobile interplay from the onset of colonialism, during colonial domination, within postcolonial new social realities, and, especially, as far as migration to and from colonial and postcolonial countries is concerned. Even when he discussed colonialism (1) Marx could not anticipate the future modifications and interplay of classes generated by throngs of people moving around the globe. Max Weber's stratification of the social system can offer a more apt set of instruments, if Weber's triad, class, status and party, is read as wealth, prestige and power, and if class is considered as being determined not only by wealth but also by prestige and power – prestige being the most difficult to assess. That is not to say that class issues have not been studied in the most crucial decades of colonialism and after. On the contrary Adorno, Lukács, Lucien Goldmann, to mention only three of the great historians, philosophers and critics who concerned themselves with class, wrote fundamental pages, including the examination of literary texts in their research (2). Yet class has hardly been studied in its specific connection with the fast moving new realities brought into being in the whole world by colonialism and migration (3). It can be said, of course, that class in Marxian and Weberian theory and class in the contexts created by migration are intrinsically different. To a certain extent this is obviously true, but, even if we can no longer speak of class struggle in the Marxian sense, and even if more attention is given to the emotional side of individuals as persons than to the masses, this is only partly true – indeed

education, money, social mobility or immobility, availability of commodities are only few of the elements constantly at work in almost every context connected with migration, determining emotional reactions and actions of paramount social consequences. Much can be found in Fanon's writings, if the concept of migration is broadened enough to include temporary migration (students for instance), and if a red thread of class allusions, which are no less strong for being most of the times implicit, is followed both through Fanon's intellectual analysis and his case studies (4). And still, even Fanon does not deal directly with any new concepts of class, and indeed in his times he could not, not yet. Nor have new theories been advanced in the recent decades to explore the extremely difficult and variegated question of class in our postcolonial, post-modern and globalised world. Most of the problems involved are all the more difficult to probe because they intersect cultural differences and because of irreversible historical processes and events.

While race, ethnicity and gender have been widely, and masterly, discussed by many scholars as well as exposed by writers of creative literature – and although class and the perception of class exudate from most of their texts – class remains mostly un-investigated and undeniably disturbing in its emotional phenomenology. Many novelists, like Edward Morgan Forster, George Orwell, Joyce Cary, Brian Moore, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, and more recently Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera, Zoë Wicomb (and there are many more) have been fairly explicit in their representations of class issues, even though in their works the narrative barycentre does not allow class to be specifically the main focus (5).

The following pages do not pretend to draft even the beginning of a theory but merely offer a very limited contribution to a more general future assessment of the 'class and migration' question by reading the novel *The Green Library* (1996) by the Canadian-Ukrainian Anglophone writer Janice Kulyk Keefer along the line of class perception and class material and emotional

conflicts. The choice of reading a novel as a form of testimony of socio-political events is fully conscious of the limits and risks of the fictional nature of a novel, and justified by *The Green Library* being itself an investigation into periods of Canadian and European history in the last century. Furthermore, as far as migration and its problems are concerned, Canada is a most interesting case study, albeit an extremely vast and multifaceted one, all the more interesting because paradoxically local and global at the same time. It is well-known that even in those settler colonies, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and partly South Africa, where the colonizers, who were at all effects themselves migrants, seemed to reproduce within their communities the class hierarchies they left in the country they came from, the class question proved itself to be problematic and too varied, even among the first colonizers themselves, to be given a systemic classification. Simultaneously, the local populations, who from the point of view of class identification could not simplistically be thought of as poor or proletarians or third state, imposed new general and biunivocal problems. The already fragmented pattern increased in complexity every time the arrival and settlement of new immigrants of diverse provenience caused the hierarchy to be modified – besides, the immigrants could not be seen as a homogeneous whole. It would be too long to give a description of class stratification (of which *The Green Library* gives more than a few eloquent illustrations) – suffice to remind the social implications of the acronym WASP: White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, or the twisted logic of the rules of the "Registration Population Act[s]" created by the Apartheid in South Africa (6). In addition, all the groups and individuals taking part in the class/classes *agon* at a certain stage became aware that they had a voice and that they needed their voice to be heard in the polyphonic whole of society – or rather, the whole system had to become interrelated and polyphonic to survive. One of the best achievements of *The Green Library* is precisely its drive towards a polyphonic network of perspectives, while the main narrative lines are maintained in tension.

That is not to say that *The Green Library* succeeds in solving centuries old problems, novels cannot and are not meant to do that, but they have the power of stirring thoughts by representing some of those problems and their costs in the past, and even by suggesting, as we shall see in Kulyk Keefer's novel, their cost in the future – Goldmann's theory of 'homology', as long as it is not used as a magic wand (7), may be helpful in reading *The Green Library*, while the novel itself offers disquieting representations of the risks of lazy generalisations and too confident rigidity in fixing social, economic, intellectual parameters to anything and anyone that appear as otherness.

When dealing with European Colonialism and with Imperialism in the Western World, the so-called Soviet Colonialism and/or Imperialism are too often barely mentioned if not altogether neglected; and yet their history and aftermaths bear many similarities to the Western ones, and become of paramount importance when they are put in connection with the worldwide phenomenon of migration in the twentieth century. Janice Kulyk Keefer's *The Green Library* offers postcolonial studies one more important contribution as it reminds the readers of the existence of that other colonialism and of the fierce and intricate struggles for power that before and after the advent of the Soviet Union continually changed the geography of Eastern Europe and caused several waves of emigration.

It would be unfair to give a detailed summary of the novel, the pleasures of the plot being in themselves an interesting feature of the book, yet at least a skeleton outline of the story is helpful: Eva Chown a forty three Torontonian WASP, divorced, mother of an eleven-year-old son, comfortably well off after her rich father's death, living with a partner, Daniel, and his adolescent daughter in a shabby big house in one of the chic areas of Toronto, while her partly deranged mother, Holly, resides in an elegant nursing home, one day receives an old photograph, dropped into her mail slot in an otherwise empty envelope. The photograph, clearly taken in the thirties of the twentieth century,

portrays a woman and a boy; the boy bears an astonishing resemblance to Eva's own son, Ben. There was a man with them, but he was cut off the photograph. This is the outset of Eva's pilgrimage, both in Toronto and in Kiev, towards the past of her family and the history of Ukrainian SSR, a country that until then had been not much more to her than "a dull green splotch on the page" of her atlas (Keefer 1996: 83). She discovers that her biological father is a Ukrainian refugee, her grandmother a Ukrainian poet, and that the 'cleaning woman', who worked for her family when she was a young girl, was not what she seemed to be. Eva will never know all the facts about her biological father's and paternal grandmother's lives – the reader will know much more.

It is perhaps too much to say that before looking at that photograph Eva, who is "not at all a political person" (Keefer 1996: 14), lived "inside the whale" (8), and yet it is not altogether preposterous, all the more so when it becomes clear that her mother, too, wanted to live in the whale, the whale for Holly being a small island in the middle of a lake in northern Canada, where she could not shake off class but, at least, ignore it, make friend with a native girl, Phonsine Kingfisher, and become the lover of a *bohunk* from the near lumber camp (9) – although one of the puzzling questions in the novel is Eva's mother lack of cultural, if not intellectual, awareness of the social world around her: she is certainly no Thoreau, while Phonsine is described as far more socially and economically alert than her. It must be said that, while it obviously includes elements of Kulyk Keefer's own experience as a Canadian-Ukrainian citizen and writer, the novel is not in the least autobiographical (10). Moreover, the fact that she created Eva Chown does not mean that Kulyk Keefer approves of her fictional character's ideas and behaviours, on the contrary Eva is more often than not the instrument of Kulyk Keefer's analysis and criticism of the social contexts shown in *The Green Library*.

Already in the first pages of *The Green Library*, we understand that the novel is structured like an ensemble of voices, literally conducted by a strong

unifying voice that connects and assigns a-solo parts, very different in length (Eva's by far the main voice), and keeps them under control by a rigorous third person narration. The narrative unfolds over more or less sixty years, from 1933 to 1993, alternating, not chronologically, Canadian and Ukrainian settings: Toronto and Porcupine Creek, Kiev and Soloveyko, a symmetry not devoid of irony. The novel is divided into eleven sections, some of which are subdivided into separated units; all sections and units bear the indication of the place and year in which the narrated events take place. In the first section, "Kiev, November 1941" it is soon clear to the reader that the woman sitting under the solemn trees of the "Green Library", a large tree-lined square in Kiev, is an intellectual, a poet – although the question here is not where does an intellectual fit in the social hierarchy, it is very clear that in *The Green Library* to be a poet, an artist and/or an intellectual, rates high in prestige, means to honour one's country, culture, family, and should be recognized as such anywhere in the world.

The representations of class interactions – long, short and very-short – are so many in the novel that a drastic selection is necessary. They start with a signal of Eva's personality: she habitually shares a bench in the park with a "bag lady"; and soon after with Daniel's running the Janus Travel Agency, specialized in dealing with a constellation of immigrants' problems. Daniel himself, depicted by Kulyk Keefer as a generous, sympathetic person, resents Eva's money and upper-class ascendancy every time he is brought to think that: "he grew up a working-class Jew and Mrs. Chown's daughter, a WASP princess from rich man's row" – Eva can afford "to work for next to nothing at a day-care" for children, while Dan's mother "still scrubs the floors of her poky, third-floor apartment in Ste. Marie de Grâce" (Keefer 1999: 17, 22). The theme of housing and urban areas as markers of class, rank and status, a study that could fill volumes, appears insistently in *The Green Library*.

In the second subdivision of the third section, "Toronto, 1963", it is not poetry but science in the form of vocational and professional aspirations that

seems to bridge the gap, although the incident elicits more bitter emotions than real communication. The scene is a vivid *mise en scène*, a superb example of hypotyposis:

> Eva's father has amassed a collection of rocks and minerals that will one day find their way to the Royal Ontario Museum, but now his study is filled with glass-topped oak tables bearing specimens of all shapes and colours. […] Alex discovers them one day when his mother is dusting the study. Refuses to leave the room […] there is quick desperate speech in that language Eva can't understand. […] She Eva follows the sound […] she holds tight to the door frame, pushing just enough of her face into the openness to let her see him, the boy gripping the edges of the display case […] (Keefer 1999: 62).

Eva's father, the rich and successful mining engineer Mr. Chown, coming back home early, enters the stage of his elegant study while the Ukrainian cleaning woman (he once corrected Eva: 'cleaning woman', not 'cleaning lady') and her son, Alex, are there, and Eva, unseen, is looking at them:

> And what Eva thinks she will never forget is how the cleaning woman turns from her own language into English […]: "Sorrry, meester, dees my son, he no mean bad ting, he be good styoodent […]" And how her father cuts through the woman's words as though they're rags she's polishing with – as though she doesn't exist as anything more than those rags […] (Keefer 1999: 63).

Too long to be fully quoted, the tableau is a choreographic epitome of how both the perception and self-perception of class work, and will work in the future, on all the actors involved. The crucial element of language bursts in a second time when the boy introduces himself to the mining engineer as 'something of a rockhound'. Both Mr. Chown and his daughter, separately, are

impressed: language is a fitting key. The boy's mother recedes out of the room, even less heeded than her rags: "Later, when Eva learns the word 'abject', she will think of that self-consuming manner of withdrawal". Another character is part of the tableau, Oksanna, the dark-haired adolescent daughter of the cleaning woman, and she is "watching a woman abase herself", and especially watching, with a mixture of anger and envy, "her brother's defection to the side of the man who pays her mother … for cleaning his house" (Keefer 1999: 63). Oksanna resents fiercely her family and her own situation in Canada. When her father goes back to Ukraine with her brother, the Chowns help her to enter the same school Eva goes to, where she proves herself a "top student, the most conspicuously gifted of them all", but this is in fact "another liability" (Keefer 1999: 80-82), and she is persistently made the target of discrimination and derision by her upper-middle-class classmates. Out of resentment, Oksanna takes revenge on Eva's budding sentiment for her brother, and is made in turn the victim of Eva's revenge. Eva manages to let their classmates know that Oksanna's mother is a 'cleaning woman', that she 'scrubs toilets for a living'. Kulyk Keefer deals most effectively with the episode, skilfully inserting in it a panoramic view, albeit fragmented, of the Canadian rigid class hierarchy in the fifties.

Denied return to Ukraine, Oksanna, with the help of well-deserved scholarships, goes to university and becomes Dr. Susan Frost, Dermatologist, MD, unmarried, rich and successful – Susan Frost is the exact translation of her Ukrainian name Oksanna Moroz. She utterly and rancorously refuses a dual identity, or, to go to the roots of her tenacity, she enters the Canadian mainstream out of class rancour. Now she is herself upper-class and wealthy, she owns a three-storied house "right downtown, in the Annex. An old house [...] expertly renovated" and "expensively furnished" (Keefer 1999: 89-90). Eva is duly impressed and humbled. What Kulyk Keefer implicitly tells the reader is that vocational and professional qualifications and achievements are established

markers of class belonging and, of course, of class perception and visibility, but simultaneously she makes Oksanna unhappiness patent and baffling at the same time.

Oksanna's mother, Olya Pavlenko (no longer Mrs. Moroz), lives in the same house, in another apartment, and even more than her daughter she

> has undergone a metamorphosis […]: the tightly braided hair now cut as beautifully as Oksanna's; the cheap, harsh housedresses changed into clothes so simple, so elegant they could only have come from the most expensive shops in town. […] Her apartment is as crowded with objects as her daughter's […] starved of them. […] Eva's disconcerted … then she kicks herself for the arrogance of the expectation: *the house of a cleaning woman, after all*. Everywhere there are paintings, books, newspapers. A kilim hangs on the wall, a kilim much finer than the ones she sees for sale in the expensive shops on Queen Street (Keefer 1999: 93).

It is Eva's turn now to feel, if not altogether inferior in elegance and culture, at least almost in awe: the 'cleaning woman' is a lady and an intellectual, she works in the Department of Slavic Studies at Toronto University, she speaks with a 'precise' accent and with agile "fluency and the simple power that goes with it" (Keefer 1999: 94).

The element of language is most important, but the theme of the house seems even more powerful throughout the novel: Eva's parents' house, rich and elegant; Eva's, expensive but shabby; Oksanna's, cold and sophisticated; Olya's, brimming with art and culture; Alex's, heart-rending in its squalor; Phonisne's house, with its pots of "rayon fuchsias" (Keefer 1999:46); the grimy "duplexes across from the railway tracks" in the part of Toronto called the Junction (Keefer 1999: 161) – and in addition a number of other drab houses fleetingly sketched within the most concise personal stories of minor characters, such as a waitress in a restaurant, a guard in a museum, a hotel receptionist in

Kiev. When he is a teenager in Toronto, in 1963, Alex dreams of an elegant house: "he respects Mr. Chown, admires him, wants to be exactly like him. To know what he does, to have a house like this, to have so beautiful a wife" (Keefer 1999: 150-151). After thirty years in Kiev, where he lives in a small one-room apartment, a "box" he calls it, Alex, *malgré soi*, keeps musing on his dream house in Toronto and of the lavishness of goods and commodities he could enjoy there. Alex is now "Professor Oleksander Moroz, Academy of Sciences, Kiev", but Kulyk Keefer makes him feel his lack of money, commodities and a comfortable, if not elegant, house as lower-class markers, especially because it is Toronto he has in mind. Eva too, without any real act of volition, cannot help a sort of Torontonian class rating of Alex's apartment in Kiev:

> The vestibule, papered in a photograph of autumn leaves, the colours leaking, soured. The bathroom, scarcely larger than the chipped enamel tub; the toilet and its inextinguishable smell of drains. […] and the shawl-draped table hardly bigger than an ironing board. And last, the verandah, looking out to nothing but the backs of other, equally dismal buildings (Keefer 1999: 180).

Eva cannot help but observe the unpredictable, dingy escalator, "the cracks in the plastic upholstery of the one chair, its padding coming out in dirt-coloured tufts, the large sack of onions under the sink" (Keefer 1999: 145, 155, 215).

In fact, most of the tension and even the rows between Eva and Alex in Kiev are basically related to money. The word 'expensive' recurs obsessively in the novel both in Toronto and Kiev, but especially in Kiev. Alex responds to the hard facts of his financial status with Orwellian (11) almost fatalistic rancour, Eva suffers every time a wound ambiguously inflicted to her both by her love for Alex and her inbred Canadian sense of class. She is "ashamed to admit that she owns a whole house, with twelve rooms in it for only four people" (Keefer 1999:159), but when she goes shopping for souvenirs her last 'whole day' in Kiev

she cannot bring herself, even for the sake of Alex, to buy objects she considers "ugly" and "shoddily manufactured" (Keefer 1999: 203). In turn, Alex thinks bitterly:

> Should he confess that one of the things he feasts on when he's in bed with her is the cleanness and goodness of the way she smells? Tell her how his wife used to line them up like trophies on the shelves, the empty containers of whatever she managed to scrounge on the black market – hair conditioner, bubble bath, mouthwash (Keefer 1999: 188).

The three parts of Max Weber's theory of social stratification are all pertinent but in *The Green Library* the emphasis is heavily on money. During their parting confrontation in Kiev, Alex bursts out: "I don't have your freedom, Eva [...]. You come to this country for two weeks, and you spend more money than most of us see in a year" (Keefer 1999: 214). Interestingly enough, Kulyk Keefer makes him use the word "freedom" in a situation redolent of a self-punishing self-perception of himself as lower-class. The prestige of being a professor and an intellectual is not enough, not even within the context of his home country, because a vision of the world outside is constantly present to him. It is mainly because of money and new prestige firmly tied together that Phonsine up north in her Porcupine Creek log-house considers her family successfully upgraded (Keefer 1999: 45).

The concept of class and the very word class have dramatically changed, things are extremely intricate and can be emotionally very dangerous. Kulyk Keefer's deontological honesty is remarkable: she makes her characters make mistakes and even dream, but she does not evade reality. She is evidently well informed as regards international migration, multicultural and transcultural theories and laws (Keefer 1996), and she is well aware that:

> There is a great difference [...] between the optimistic mobility, the intellectual liveliness, and 'the logic of daring' described by the various

theoreticians on whose work I have drawn, and the massive dislocations, waste, misery, and horrors endured in our century's migrations and mutilated lives (Said 1994: 403).

The Green Library is an extremely crafted and rich novel, perhaps too much. If it is undeniable that Kulyk Keefer's emphasis falls mainly on personal and interpersonal conflicts but it is true, too, that her representation is also a perceptive analysis of the causes and outcomes of those conflicts, even in a far-reaching future. At the cost of falling into the trap of a 'fictional fallacy', that is the fallacy of dealing with fictional characters as if they were real persons in real life with a past and a future outside the first and last page of the novel, it is very difficult to resist the temptation of speculating about the future of Eva, Alex, Oksanna, and especially about the adult life of Eva's son Ben. Kulyk Keefer, very early in the novel, gives the reader an almost hidden flash-forward of Ben's and Julie's future:

> Julie has become a medical engineer; she designs appliances and prostheses for paraplegics, amputees, stroke victims. […] Unlike Julie, he Ben has no profession to speak of. Instead he has a rash of stamps and visas on his passport; he does odd jobs until he makes enough money to settle somewhere and paint for six months, and then he's off again (Keefer 1999: 16).

Ben, in a way, is a misfit, his maternal grandmother was a sort of misfit too, his maternal grandfather a war criminal, his Ukrainian grand-grandparents a poet and a painter. Indeed, it is not easy to assign him to a social class, he seems to live beyond the concept of class: a fascinating hint to read the novel along another of its threads, that of a seemingly noble, yet dubious and hazardous, sort of escapism.

NOTES

1. Avineri, Shlomo, Marx, Karl. 1969. *On Colonialism & Modernization*. New York: Doubleday.

2. Adorno, a migrant of excellence in Los Angeles, frequently inserts observations on class in his works; particularly interesting for their modernity are those disseminated in *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (*Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, 1951); Lukács, addressing the problem of class in *History and Class Consciousness* writes: "Marx's chief work breaks off just as he is to embark on the definition of class. This omission was to have serious consequences both for the theory and the practice of the proletariat" (Lukács 1971: 46). Lucien Goldmann, who being a Rumanian refugee was himself a migrant, has the great merit of insinuating doubts in *Pour une sociologie du roman* (1963), and, even before that, in the crevices of *Le dieu caché* (1955). Yet, although fully conscious of the changing times, it was too early for them to discuss class in connection with migration.

3. In his *Diasporas in the Contemporary World* (Esman 2009), Milton J. Esman examines several extremely interesting aspects of class stratification, unrest and ensuing turbulences. He does not touch directly interpersonal class problems (nor literary representations of them either), yet psychological problems of class perception ooze incessantly between the lines. After reminding the readers that "Diasporas arrive[d] as conquerors and settlers" as well as "refugees escaping war or persecution […] fleeing drought, famine, or overpopulation", Esman states that "Never have there been so many transnational migrants as during the current era" (Esman 2009: 3-4). Esman does not forget the transportation of slaves but does not pursue that particular aspect of 'coerced' migration. In the third chapter of the book, Esman analyses aspects of the Ukrainian immigration in Canada.

4. Fanon offers several most interesting examples of that in Chapter 2 and 3 of

Peau noire, masques blancs (1952). *Ausländers* and *Ostarbeiters* should be added but that would make things even more complex.

5. Early instances of reciprocal class perception appear in Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924); later, to mention only few writers apparently very different one from the other, interpersonal problems connected with class are crucial in some of Achebe's novels and in more than one of Nadine Gordimer's novels; in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), and in Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light* (2008) aspirations cannot but be subjected to class. In Canada class issues are connected with immigration since the very beginning of European settlements – they are already extant in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852); it is impossible to give even a selected list of the Canadian writers who introduced elements of class belonging and consciousness in their works – two interesting examples are Brian Moore's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960) and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996). Outside Canada, the Irish writer Roddy Doyle deals with class belonging and class perception, moving from Polish to Nigerian immigration in Ireland, in *The Deportees* (2007), fulfilling in its eight short stories the promise implicit in his previous novel *Paula Spencer* (2006).

6. In her novel *Playing in the Light*, Zoë Wicomb offers extremely enlightening pages, first when she makes her leading character, Marion, who never doubted to be entirely white, pore on the texts of laws and amendments, and subsequently fleshing them out with segments of the life of Marion's parents (Wicomb: 2006, 120-134).

7. Lucien Goldmann deals with the concept of 'homology' in his *Pour une sociologie du roman* (1973).

8. This is a reference to the well known, and yet today not enough valued, Orwell's 'whale' as it is discussed in his tripartite essay *Inside the Whale* (1940).

9. 'Bohunk' is a disparaging term for a person coming from East-Central and

South-Eastern Europe, especially if a new immigrant and manual labourer.

10. Kulyk Keefer tells the story of her Ukrainian-Polish family in *Honey and Ashes – A Story of Family* (1998), where she also gives a detailed account of her long visit to the place her family came from on the historically unstable border between Poland and Ukraine.

11. Orwellian is here thought especially in connection with *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936).

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Stefania Basset

"Snapshots of Caliban": Suniti Namjoshi's 'Contrapuntal Rewriting' of *The Tempest*

Abstract I: In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said suggests that Caliban should ally himself with all subjugated people, yet in his works he dedicates little space to differences of gender or sexual orientation. In her cycle of poems "Snapshots of Caliban" (1984), Suniti Namjoshi amplifies Said's concept of reading contrapuntally by offering a cultural resistance that is at the same time postcolonial, lesbian and feminist. Being at a crossroads of three variables, Namjoshi has a vantage point on imperialism and gives an alternative kind of 'contrapuntal reading' that is actually a 'contrapuntal rewriting', and therefore fosters new developments and possibilities in postcolonial studies.

Abstract II: In *Cultura e Imperialismo*, Said suggerisce che Caliban debba allearsi con tutti gli oppressi, anche se nelle sue opere dedica poco spazio alle questioni di genere o di orientamento sessuale. Nel ciclo di poesie "Snapshots of Caliban" (1984), Suniti Namjoshi amplia il concetto di lettura contrappuntistica coniato da Said, offrendo una resistenza culturale che è allo stesso tempo postcoloniale, lesbica e femminista. Trovandosi all'incrocio di tre variabili, Namjoshi ha uno sguardo nuovo sull'imperialismo ed offre una 'lettura contrappuntistica' che è di fatto una 'riscrittura contrappuntistica' e perciò incoraggia nuovi sviluppi e possibilità per gli studi postcoloniali.

"Remembering Shakespeare always, but remembering him differently"

(Doolittle 1949: 31)

Over the centuries, there have been countless adaptations of *The Tempest* that have experimented with the characters in the play, changed the setting of the story, or played with the plot. Writers stemming from the Caribbean have seen Caliban as a mark of the resistance of colonized people over the colonizers. Classic re-appropriations by postcolonial writers – for example that offered by Aimé Césaire in his play *Une Tempête* – were mainly identifications with Caliban, the male colonized subject, and this is why adaptations of the play by postcolonial authors have been written for a long time almost exclusively by male authors, with a perspective on colonization that was unconsciously male. Women writers have focused instead on the overwhelming patriarchy disclosed in the play, employing Miranda in their re-inscriptions, and sometimes recasting her as a heroine who rebels against the authority of her father. As a consequence, many contemporary re-appropriations of *The Tempest* tend to focus either on the colonial/postcolonial experience, or on the defiance of what has been considered to be Prospero's restrictive power. Yet, for postcolonial and black women writers neither Miranda nor Caliban are satisfactory identifications, because Miranda is white and European, while Caliban is a man. In order to claim their postcolonial and gendered positionality, postcolonial and black women writers had to think of different strategies. One has been to allow more space to Sycorax, Caliban's witch mother whose entrance on stage never happens, while another has been that of fantasizing over Caliban's female descendants, and his intention to people the island with Calibans (1).

Refreshing the Inaugural Figures
Considering its undeniable appeal for Caribbean writers, *The Tempest* does not seem to have inspired many Indian writers, perhaps because its setting on an almost uninhabited tropical island is perceived as too distant from the Indian

experience. An exception is Indian-born poet and fabulist Suniti Namjoshi, who uses *The Tempest* as a reference more than once in her work, dedicating two cycles of poems, "Snapshots of Caliban" (1984) and "Sycorax" (2006), to the play (2). As Said puts it when he discusses Caliban as a figure of resistance to the empire, "it is a measure of how embattled this matter of 'inaugural figures' has become that it is now virtually impossible to say anything simple about any of them" (Said 1993: 212). As a matter of fact, in the Caribbean, the discussion on *The Tempest* has been going on for decades, and has been in a sense 'crystallized' by certain fundamental texts (3). Perhaps because she does not come from the Caribbean, Suniti Namjoshi is able to bring a fresh perspective on the 'inaugural figures' featured in the play, as well as on the connections between colonialism, patriarchy and sexuality raised by the text.

"Snapshots of Caliban" departs from most appropriations of *The Tempest* in the sense that its author attempts to incorporate the postcolonial and the feminist perspectives. Furthermore, for a lesbian writer like Namjoshi, the stringencies of colonialism and patriarchy are only contiguous to those dictated by heteronormativity, which is related to the assumption that in the elaboration of culture heterosexuality is always conceived as the norm, and alternative forms of sexuality are often not taken into consideration (4). As a matter of fact, Suniti Namjoshi's cycle of poems "Snapshots of Caliban" curiously imagines Caliban as a lesbian woman, colonized by the white people who have taken possession of the island she had considered hers. Here Namjoshi attempts to find a gendered and postcolonial, as well as lesbian, space of representation within the literary text. Her way of approaching *The Tempest* is consistent with the critique attempted by Laura E. Donaldson, who talks of a "Miranda complex", to be paired with a so-called "Prospero Complex", that is to say a "reading structured so tightly by a single principle […] that it excludes all other interpretive categories" (Donaldson 1992: 17) (5).

Said and Intersectionality

In *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said suggests that Caliban should be used as an example of solidarity between all subjugated people, be they men or women, black or white, heterosexual or homosexual, and so on. He writes: "it is best when Caliban sees his own history as an aspect of the history of all subjugated men and women, and comprehends the complex truth of his own social and historical situation" (Said 1993: 214). Yet, in spite of this attempt at inclusion, as critic Robert Aldrich has observed, Said "had little to say about homosexuality" (Aldrich 2003: 7). When he writes about Forster's *A Passage to India*, for instance, he never considers possible connections between the author's homosexuality and his point of view on colonial relationships, in fact never mentioning Forster's sexual preferences, which other critics have judged important in order to understand his view of male bonding as a "distant desire" connected to other lands (Baski 1996). In other words, Said has been criticized for what has been called a "conspicuously heterosexual interpretive framework" (Boone 1995: 90). At the same time, Reina Lewis has lamented the paucity of gender issues in *Orientalism*, observing that "for Said […] Orientalism is a homogenous discourse enunciated by a colonial subject that is unified, intentional and irredeemably male" (Lewis 1996: 17). Moreover, as Susan Fraiman notes in an essay on Said and Jane Austen, while he is ready to grant Conrad an awareness of situations of marginality due to his own condition as a foreigner in England, he does not consider the possibility that in the same way Jane Austen might have been influenced by her gender, and therefore by her own marginality, in her opinions and commentaries about colonialism. Said's treatment of Jane Austen, Fraiman argues, is indicative of "a more general gender politics underlying his postcolonial project" (Fraiman 1995: 807).

It is evident that when he deals with authors who are interesting to discuss with the help of what could be termed 'intersectionality', Said tends to "[proceed] for the most part along a single axis" (Fraiman 1995: 816), thus

reproducing that unconscious Miranda's complex that Donaldson writes about (6). Far from discarding Said because he did not always highlight the intersections of gender, class, or sexuality with colonialism in his work, I think it is useful to recognize the blind spots of his readings, in order to be aware of the possibility of reproducing some of the structures one is trying to dismantle (7). In the light of these reflections, it is important to acknowledge how writers and critics like Suniti Namjoshi, who find themselves at the crossroads of at least three variables, have a vantage point on cultural imperialism and can give fresh insights into the topics raised by Said.

Namjoshi's Contrapuntal Axes

"Snapshots of Caliban" is a sequence of seventeen short poems. While some are written in prose, others are in the form of diary entries written by the various characters in Shakespeare's play. In Namjoshi's re-inscription, Caliban forms an alliance with Miranda against Prospero's patriarchal power, but a fracture between the two women is also present because Miranda is seen as complicit with Prospero's colonial domination. In other words, Caliban and Miranda are 'sisters', but as Lady Shy says in another of Namjoshi's works, the enigmatic longer fiction *Building Babel*, "there certainly is a problem. The problem is that the sisters aren't sisterly" (Namjoshi 1996: 28). Miranda is discriminated against and patronized by Prospero because of her gender, but at the same time she discriminates against and patronizes Caliban because of her race. As the author claims in an interview, "what sometimes happens in the course of activism is the tendency to claim moral ascendancy on the grounds that one is oppressed and that is not really reasonable. For one thing, if one is oppressed in one way, it does not imply that one is oppressed in every way" (Vevaina 1998: 195). By the end of the cycle, however, Miranda and Caliban manage to reach a compromise, laughing about their past skirmishes. Differences need to be acknowledged, while bridges between gender, class, race, and sexual

preferences need to be made, Namjoshi seems to tell her readers.

The term "snapshots" in the title – perhaps a reference to Adrienne Rich's collection of poems *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963) – points at the fragmentary nature of the poetical material at stake, at the multiple personae who are voiced in the text, and at the heterogeneous forms employed. The title of the sequence, with its allusion to photography, consciously hints at different perspectives and subjectivities, and at a lack of narrative unity. Another connection to the work of Adrienne Rich is evident if one considers that Namjoshi's cycle of poems enacts what Rich defines as "re-vision", which is, according to her, "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text with a new critical direction" (Rich 1972: 35). That performed by Suniti Namjoshi in "Snapshots of Caliban" is therefore a peculiar kind of 'contrapuntal reading', or rather of 'contrapuntal rewriting'. Said famously defines his contrapuntal strategy as "a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 1993: 51). For him, reading a text contrapuntally means being able to take into account the point of view of both the colonizer and the colonized, simultaneously. Accordingly, Namjoshi says that her work is engaged in shedding light on what she calls the 'warring egos' in the Shakespearean text and in her identity building (Namjoshi 1989: 83). The warring egos of Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda mirror the author's warring and simultaneous identities as a woman, an Indian person living in the West, and a lesbian. The work of writers like Namjoshi helps fracture some of the binary oppositions unconsciously created by Said, such as the clear-cut distinction between supporting and resisting imperialism. What Namjoshi does is offer many intersecting axes, rather than just two, which is what Said does most of the time in *Culture and Imperialism*. Said's strategy of looking at a text contrapuntally needs not be discarded, but it certainly needs to be expanded, as if the harmonically interdependent but rhythmically separate voices of the sheet

music he offered as a metaphor were actually more than two, and somehow multidimensional, so that multiple melodic lines are available for the reader to compare and analyse.

Keeping in mind the "warring egos" Namjoshi is interested in, it is easier to understand why the inspiration for these poems came from W.H. Auden's *The Sea and the Mirror* (Kanaganayakam 1995: 57). In that long poem, written and published in the 1940s, Auden criticized the Manichean opposites he saw engraved in *The Tempest*, and tried to recast the characters in the play as complementary. In Namjoshi's re-vision of *The Tempest,* as in Auden's work, the idea is that each character opposes and compensates the others, so that Miranda has something of Caliban inside her, and Caliban something of the "gentle" Miranda, not to mention of Prospero, who in turn acknowledges both creatures as his. If Said tends to sublimate identities, such as that of the Orient, which he criticizes but also ends up reinforcing due to a reluctance to use a less essentialist terminology throughout his work (Ahmad 1992; Young 1990), Namjoshi constantly works to make her readers aware that identities are not fixed. In *Because of India*, which is an anthology of her works with useful retrospective commentary, Namjoshi writes: "Identity isn't only a matter of self-definition. It also depends on the identity that that other attributes to one. […] As a creature, a lesbian creature, how do I deal with all the other creatures who have their own identities, or perhaps I mean their own identifications? It's apparent that the components of the core identity change from place to place and period to period" (Namjoshi 1989: 84).

Fracturing the Conventional 'I' of the Poem

In order to show the tension of allegiances of the "Third World lesbian woman", the overlapping territories a writer like Namjoshi is forced to walk on, the author makes the personae of her poems hard to distinguish. It is impossible to attribute "Snapshot i", for instance, to either Prospero, Caliban or Miranda, because all

are possible speakers in the poem. Namjoshi writes:

> Not wrong to have wanted you,
> but wrong
> should the desire, being thwarted,
> turn to rage.
> And there is rage.
> Cal, Cal, Caliban
> threshes her limbs. For this –
> pardon
> I and my creature
> must seek for grace (Namjoshi 1989: 85).

Since the title of the sequence mentions Caliban only, one is inclined to think that the persona of the poem is the "abhorred slave" (Shakespeare 2000: I.ii) of Shakespeare's play, here transmuted into a woman who desires Miranda, repents about her rage (perhaps a reference to the attempted rape in the original text, also suggested by the assonance "rape-rage"), and punishes herself, also evoking the rebellion against Prospero in the play, where he cheekily calls out "'Ban Ban', Cacaliban" (Shakespeare 2000: II.ii), playing on his own name. The last verse of the poem is the most ambiguous, as "I and my creature / must seek for grace" may point at Prospero as a speaker, who acknowledges Caliban as his creature in the play, or at Caliban's own dark and raging side that must be tamed, as suggested by the reference to the moment in *The Tempest* when Caliban says "I'll be wise hereafter, and seek for grace" (Shakespeare 2000: V.i). Moreover, the sudden introduction of Caliban's gender in the sequence ("Caliban / threshes her limbs") comes as a shock for the reader, and is a reminder that gender should not be taken for granted in lyric poetry. One starts wondering whether the speaker of the poem, who unexpectedly takes an active role in loving someone, is a woman, perhaps

Miranda having a homoerotic affinity with Caliban but having ambivalent feelings about it. Subversion is an important element in Namjoshi's writing, and because of this, intertextual references can be misleading and contradictory, as illustrated in this first snapshot, where the use of a seemingly Calibanesque language ("Cal, Cal, Caliban") suggests one speaker, while the reference to the moment when Prospero acknowledges Caliban as his "thing of darkness" seems to suggest another, equally possible persona.

In the second poem of the sequence, explicitly addressed at Caliban, a first series of alliterations – "*s*he wa*s* / *s*quat and ugly", "*s*ometime*s s*he cried. / *S*ometime*s s*he lied", "she was so *s*ly, and *s*ometime*s* / *s*o forthright" – is an allusion at the disgust that the unidentified speaker feels for the slave. A second series of alliterations – "*m*urderee", "*m*onstrous *m*e", "save herself / and *m*e from *m*e" (Namjoshi 1989: 86) – suggests Miranda, whose name also begins with 'm', as the 'monstrous' speaker with murderous intentions. In the third poem of the cycle, the speaker is again impossible to determine:

> Suppose I came across her
>
> while she was sleeping,
>
> her lips half-smiling,
>
> her body calm,
>
> wholly absorbed in her dear dream;
>
> or caught her staring
>
> her ears prickling
>
> to the strange sounds, the brave scenes
>
> or found her fishing
>
> in a cranny of the island,
>
> unaware of the others,
>
> would I not like her?
>
> Would I not speak,
>
> and approaching her slowly

try to make friends?

Indeed, as I watched the monster,

would I not feel a monstrous grief? (Namjoshi 1989: 87).

Reading the first lines of the poem, it would appear obvious that it is Miranda who is seen sleeping, her lips parted and her breath gentle, her body peaceful, not at all monstrous. After all, the name Miranda is traditionally interpreted as meaning 'she who is being watched', and in the Shakespearean text Miranda refuses to look at Caliban, who is in fact construed as the one who is not to be looked at. Yet, while the poem goes on, it becomes impossible to distinguish who is speaking and who is the passive object of the gaze. It is in fact Caliban who in *The Tempest* listens to the strange sounds of the island, who knows its secrets, and who could easily be fishing. The reader slowly begins to contemplate the possibility that it is Caliban, rather than Miranda, who is being watched. In other words, Namjoshi is reversing the idea that a Medusa-like female monster, or the barbaric cannibal slave, or worse the depraved black lesbian woman, should not be watched, nor approached with friendliness. It is therefore unclear whether it is Miranda who is watching Caliban and is feeling an almost homoerotic desire for her, or whether it is Prospero, safely male, approaching his slave in a sexual way. It is hard to deny that in this sequence of poems Namjoshi is commenting on a play that already discusses the anxiety over both homoeroticism and misgenation, for example in the scene where Trinculo and Caliban are under the gabardine and appear to Stephano as one monster of an animal.

In "Who Wrongs You, Sappho?", an essay written together with her partner and fellow poet Gillian Hanscombe, Namjoshi writes: "in the lyric tradition of poetry in the English language [...] the 'I' – the lover, the pursuer, the wooer, the thinker, the speaker – was assumed by convention to be male; whereas the 'you', who was addressed, but who – of course – remained silent, was assumed to be female" (Namjoshi and Hanscombe 1991: 156). Further on in the essay,

Namjoshi and Hanscombe assert that, "despite the richness of the poetic tradition, its whole universe was a rigidly heterosexual one, at the centre of which was a long continuity of male consciousness, which was itself patriarchal in its assumptions about all forms of order. […] In other words, it wasn't simply that pronouns were gendered, but also that imagery itself was gender role stereotyped" (Namjoshi & Hanscombe 1991: 157).

The third poem of the sequence is followed by "Caliban's Journal", a section written in the form of short prose poems that are also entries from a journal Caliban is writing in her new acquired language. It is interesting to see how Namjoshi makes her Caliban literate. Gone is the play's "startling encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture […], almost parodies, in the relationship between a European whose entire source of power is his library and a savage who had no speech at all before the European's arrival" (Greenblatt 1990: 23). Here Namjoshi is not merely answering with what Said calls a "journey in" (Said 1993: 216) to "the great colonial masterpieces, which not only misrepresented [the former silent natives] but assumed they were unable to read and respond directly to what had been written about them" (Said 1993: 31), but she is suggesting that counter-representations – of colonized people, of women, of homosexuals and so on, but also of any combination of those – are often conceived and written in conjunction with those offered by the colonizers, and they can also clash one against the other. In other words, it is not always a question of writing back from the former colonies, but of writing alongside or against imperialism. In those prose poems, Caliban also confronts herself with heterosexuality in the person of Ferdinand, here an educated white man who remains unnamed in the sequence, and whose hands Miranda accepts to look at, while still refusing to look at Caliban's. The opposition between Miranda, "she who is admired, looked at", and Caliban who should not be watched, is evident here.

"Snapshot viii" is in the form of Miranda's journal, where she also writes a

hate poem to Caliban, but then crosses out her furious outburst, finally acknowledging that Caliban is a part of her. In the same way, Caliban in "snapshot xvi" finds a way to accept her raging side, epitomized by a tiger she dreams of, and can finally laugh about how different she is from Miranda.

Interestingly, in "snapshot ix", where the speaker is undoubtedly Prospero, the situation is reversed, because Caliban and Miranda are impossible to distinguish, due to their intrinsic difference in the eyes of Prospero. Namjoshi writes:

Two monsters are crawling out of my eyes

and onto the sand, scrabbling and scuttling,

climbing and sliding on top of one another,

tipping over stones, doing themselves,

and one another too, some damage, perhaps.

Of the two crabs which is more dainty?

Which one of the two least crab-like?

Most graceful? Is there a lovelier sheen

no one curved carapace, a subtler shine? (Namjoshi 1989: 94).

Here Namjoshi conjures up a veiled erotic scene, reminiscent of the one featuring Caliban and Trinculo in the original play. From an aesthetic point of view it is one of the best achievements in the sequence, as the word "scrabbling" contains the word 'crab', and the hard sounds ("scuttling", "crawling") recall the dissonance and uneasiness that Prospero feels while watching the monsters he created. The last poem of the sequence offers once again Prospero's point of view, where he, not unlike Miranda and Caliban who have both accepted their dark side in previous poems, acknowledges both Miranda and Caliban as his creatures, both a conflation of "maiden and monster" (Namjoshi 1989: 102). Prospero has no answers to explain how and if he

created Miranda and/or Caliban. Emblematically, the poem contains four question marks, as if to emphasize the impossibility to attribute fixed identities and meanings to the characters, and also to the whole sequence.

In conclusion, in "Snapshots of Caliban", Namjoshi plays with the reader's assumptions about the personae of her poems, deliberately refusing to assign clear identities, determined either by race, gender or sexuality, and blurring the subjectivity of each character. Namjoshi denounces how cultural imperialism, through the implied speakers of poetry, plays an important role even outside of the opposition between colonizer and colonized. Writers who, like Namjoshi, straddle numerous marginalities open the study of cultures and imperialisms to topics that were unconsciously neglected by Edward Said, fostering new developments and possibilities for postcolonial studies. One could say that the contrapuntal strategy devised by Said is therefore amplified, rather than rejected, by Namjoshi, who uses the concept of the simultaneous awareness of multiple histories and points of view within literary texts in order to highlight the ambiguities and the conflicting allegiances often inherent in them.

NOTES

1. Attempts to retrieve Sycorax include, apart from Namjoshi's cycle of poems "Sycorax", which will not be discussed in this essay, Malaysian American artist and performance artist Chin Wong Ping's play *Psycho Wracks*, first performed in 2001, British-Italian-Caribbean writer Marina Warner's novel *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* (1992), as well as some lyrical essays written by Caribbean women writers such as M. NourbeSe Philip and Michelle Cliff. Among male writers, Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite with his 'Sycorax video style' has also offered Sycorax the possibility to finally enter the stage. *By Avon River*, an experimental text written by H.D. and published in 1949, even tries to retrieve Claribel, Alonso's daughter who is married off to the King of Tunis. Fantasizing over Caliban's female descendants is another possibility

adopted several times in order to offer the perspective of a postcolonial woman, for instance in an anthology of Caribbean women's writing called *Daughters of Caliban*. Moreover, Michelle Cliff wrote an essay entitled "Caliban's Daughter: the Tempest and the Teapot" that retrieves Sycorax but also reinforces an identification through Caliban's descendants.

2. "Snapshots of Caliban" was first published in 1984 in *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares*, and later included in an anthology of Namjoshi's writings called *Because of India* (1989). The quotations from "Snapshots of Caliban" included in this essay are from the latter. Suniti Namjoshi, born in Bombay in 1941, is the author of several volumes of poetry, books of fables, and longer fictions. Her most famous and praised book to date is *Feminist Fables* (1981).

3. George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile*, Aimé Césaire's play *Une Tempête*, and Roberto Fernández Retamar's essay "Calibán" are considered the pioneering re-interpretations of *The Tempest* that work on Caliban as a mark of resistance to Prospero, the colonizer. Hailing from Barbados, Martinique and Cuba respectively, these writers give an idea of how iconic *The Tempest* is in the postcolonial debate of the Caribbean.

4. This is not the only postcolonial and lesbian feminist work on *The Tempest*. Lesbianism is in Cliff's agenda in the essay "Caliban's Daughter: The Tempest and the Teapot", where she discusses the value of both the concept and the terminology related to lesbianism in the Caribbean. Furthermore, in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* there are implicit references to *The Tempest* and to the reclamation of the existence of a female colonial subject, not to mention to forms of sexuality that defy normativity. Lesbianism in Kincaid's novella is nonetheless hinted at, but with the assumption that it will be re-absorbed into heterosexuality once the protagonist's turbulent period of adolescence is finished.

5. "The Prospero Complex" is a concept initially developed by French psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni, who had worked in various French colonies,

and in 1950 published a study called *La Psychologie de la Colonization*, then translated into English as *Prospero & Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. He based his analysis on observations made in Madagascar, soon after a revolt of the indigenous people ended with one of the harshest repressions in colonial history. Mannoni considered that the colonized subject is constantly in a dependency relationship with the colonizer, and therefore the former requires the presence of the latter. Prospero, on the other hand, always according to Mannoni's study, suffers from a paternalistic complex. Mannoni's work was criticized by both Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, who attempted to write about the same dynamics from the point of view of the colonized. Laura E. Donaldson, in a study called *Decolonizing Feminisms*, criticized any monolithic reading of *The Tempest*, or of any other text for that matter, considering how the obsession for one relationship – either that between master and slave, or that between mother and daughter – obfuscates the other relationships in the play, making the critic blind to other dynamics within the text.

6. The concept of 'intersectionality' was first introduced in the late 1980s by legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw with reference to the influence of both race and gender in the discrimination against black women in the USA. It was successfully adopted as a valid model to discuss the intersections of many variables in women's experiences, such as race, sexuality, class, and ethnicity.

7. As Susan Gubar humorously writes in an essay on feminist criticism, while acknowledging the faults of certain readings, it is better to avoid writing "depressingly knee-jerk essays rejecting out-of-hand the speculations of a given literary or theoretical work simply because it neglects to discuss x (fill in the blank – bisexual Anglo-Pakistani mothers; the heterosexual, working-class Jew-for-Jesus community of Nashville, and so forth)" (Gubar 1998: 890-1).

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A Reading of the Imperial Theme in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Abstract I: The following paper tries to prove the value and relevance of the critical-methodological discourse of Said's *Culture and Imperialism* for the early modern period. The chronological focus of Said's theoretical framework has been widened to include Renaissance Literature and applied to the analysis of the representations of political power in Stuart's England through a close-reading of William's Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Abstract II: Il saggio si propone di far emergere l'importanza che il discorso critico-metodologico di Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* potrebbe assumere nell'ambito degli studi sul Rinascimento inglese. I limiti cronologici adottati nell'analisi di Said sono stati estesi per dimostrare come la sua teoria critica, traslata nell'Inghilterra degli Stuart, sia efficace strumento per analizzare le modalità di rappresentazione del potere politico del tempo attraverso una *close-reading* di *Antony and Cleopatra* di William Shakespeare.

Understanding Shakespeare in the light of Cultural and Postcolonial Studies is the aim of this paper, taking into consideration that, for most of the last century, and with increasing importance and insistence, Shakespeare has become the subject/object of this kind of critical enquiry. As a result, Shakespeare's *corpus* has undergone critical investigation as a product of, and a commentary upon, the cultural context of his own times. Harold Bloom, in his characteristically thought-provoking, challenging style, has stated that Shakespeare was primarily and solely responsible for culture itself – inventing, as he did, ways of being 'human' (Bloom: 1998). This "early-modern cultural turn" (1) has provided a new

model of analysis that has helped the reader understand and interpret Shakespearian texts through a multidisciplinary approach. And being multifaceted and polyphonic, this approach is capable of giving consideration and importance to different cultural influences and perspectives that had been neglected or altogether ignored before. Due to the broader cultural scope added to literary critical methodology, there is still much more to be seen and interpreted in Early-Modern texts and, in this perspective, one must give pride of place to the analysis of Shakespeare's *opus*. If, following this new pathway, one combines the Cultural Studies' analytical model with a Postcolonial theoretical approach, one can envisage a completely new mode of perception and understanding of what Shakespearean texts signify.

The central aim of this paper is to re-contextualize Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* from both a theoretical and practical point-of-view in the light of Said's discourse as he proposed in his seminal book *Culture and Imperialism* (Said 1994). His perspective offers a useful method for extracting cultural content from the literary texts and allows the reader to focus on the political and cultural representation of colonialism and imperialism present in *Antony and Cleopatra*. At the same time, he shows how to understand cultural representations of beliefs, practices and symbols that mark colonial thought and descriptive mode in Shakespeare and other early-modern texts.

Might one read *Antony and Cleopatra* in this theoretical perspective while remaining aware of Shakespeare's England with all its cultural and political implications?

In fact, in opposition to the present reading, *Antony and Cleopatra* has been mostly considered as a Renaissance version of a modern romance where the sexual relationship between the two lovers obscures the political struggles within the Roman Empire – so much so that sexuality appears to transcend politics in the play (2). In colonial discourse, the powerful male sexuality of the conqueror is one of the most important *traits* of dominance of both new territory

and its subjects. From this viewpoint, it becomes difficult to see and understand the tragedy's relations to other Jacobean texts and to the poetics of political display which inform them and shape their structure and content.

In contrast to long-established interpretations, the present reading of the play is focused on the display of politics as a form of reciprocal seduction between the two protagonists. Shakespeare makes his contemporary audience feel the seduction of a world free of patriarchal power. An early-seventeenth-century theatre-goer would have perceived and immediately rejected the very idea because of the undesirable and fearsome political crisis inherent in such a utopia. Shakespeare's drama sets up the idea of detaching sexuality from politics, only to demonstrate the impossibility of doing so and to show his audience the disruption, destruction and death if such a course should ever be taken.

The spatial changes define different aspects of power both at a concrete level – land, empire – and at an abstract one – emotions, ideology and sexuality; the issues of imperial expansion, political power and sexual domination are dramatically compressed into spatial and geographical shifts and metaphors. Such metaphors are designed to reveal the complexity of the land and its dwellers to set boundaries between centre and periphery, inner and outer spaces and, above all, they epitomize the subalternity of the conquered land and the colonized body. Suffice here to remind the reader of the geographical metaphor of discovery used by John Donne in his *Elegy XIX*: *To his Mistress Going to Bed* which connects and combines discoveries and conquest of Newfoundland to the erotic appropriation and possession of the female body (3).

The powerful picture of the new political and cultural ambitions of Jacobean England, or rather Britannia, which were emerging with the public image of James I, foreshadows England's role as agent of civilization strongly highlighted by England's colonial pursuit at the time – the scramble for land

clearly shown, for instance, in Walter Raleigh's Second Voyage to Guyana. This expedition made clear the all-pervasive colonial rapacity that looked forward to British colonial rule of the first empire. Contemporary insistence on the parallel between the Roman Empire and Stuart England was a reflection of the Jacobean political representation of the new monarch's ideals and practices, which Shakespeare precisely portrays in *Antony and Cleopatra.* The Jacobean imperialist rhetoric of power and politics will emerge fully in the representation of the public role of King James I in a cultural and literary show. Re-reading the parallel depicted by Shakespeare through Said's methods of inquiry offers an invaluable framework for shedding light on some aspects of current critical debates on subalternity, both cultural and geographical, as well as on the challenging problem of mapping the subject.

In the first chapter of *Culture and Imperialism* entitled "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories" (Said 1994: 1-50), discussing the race for territories of colonial politics, Edward Said stresses the importance of the relationship between colonized and colonizers seen as exchanges of cultural power since the once colonized, in the course of history, become, at times, future colonizers themselves thus creating a perennial shift of boundaries in politics, race and culture. This overlapping of cultures and geographies, as well as the intertwining of histories, is at the core of the tragedy under scrutiny –the unequal *rapport* between unequal interlocutors is represented by the dichotomy existing by Western and Eastern empires and rulers in the texts. A second dichotomy pervading the text is reflected in the cultural clash of civilizations between Rome and Egypt epitomized in the opposition between Octavius and Cleopatra and between Octavius and Antony. A third dichotomy stands in the resistance and opposition to the Roman colonial rule played out at different levels and by different *dramatis personae* who frequently change sides and make boundaries overlap in the play. A fourth dichotomy is displayed by the character of Antony always shown as struggling to find a balance between

two cultures, East and West. He is torn between diverse histories, diverse geographies, and diverse women – Fulvia, Cleopatra and Octavia. He tries to remain true to Roman culture and loyal to Octavius in spite of his obsession for mapping new geographies and new subjects as he struggles to maintain his imperial power in the East.

What is most striking in the text from the very beginning, and this deserves new critical attention since it prefigures British colonial thought, is the parallel drawn between the intertwining histories of the former Roman Empire and Jacobean England, proposing the analogy of Octavius and James I. In fact, when James I came to the throne in 1603, poets and dramatists invented pageants for James's coronation, translating into icons the theory which was to support and enforce the role of new King. Their iconography declared that the King was the new 'England's Caesar'. Writing of James's coronation pageant, Jonathan Goldberg (4) has suggested that the major trope of this pageant – indeed of James's entire reign – was that of 'revival' since James encouraged and welcomed a representation of himself as the British equivalent and embodiment of a Roman Emperor – and literary and cultural practices were meant to emphasize this connection. James I enjoyed being hailed with the title of 'Rex Pacificus' and being presented as the new 'Augustus Novus' – James wanted to be an imperial peace-maker, which is a wish voiced by Octavius in the play "The time of universal peace is near./Prove this a prosperous day, the three-nooked world/Shall bear the olive freely" (Shakespeare 1954: 4.6.4-6).

In a Roman setting, James claimed for himself a role of deity as Roman and Byzantine emperors had done before him. In this context, poets, playwrights, members of court and parliament, along with subjects would have been aware of a new insistence on the iconic nature of the king's body. James maintained not only that he had the only body whose blood united all of Britain but also that he existed in unbroken continuity in the tradition of monarchy. This was precisely the image of Stuart mythology that was extended and projected

beyond the first public pageant for the new king in 1605. Anthony Munday's lord mayor pageant, *The Triumphes of Re-United Britannia*, included an account of the myth of Brutus and his founding of England in which the new monarch was celebrated as "second Brute, Royall King James". Munday's text is prefaced by a survey of 'British' history (5) that supplies perspectives for *Antony and Cleopatra*, stating that James, the "second Brute", had put to rights the disastrous error made by the first one – that of dividing the realm in three states – restoring in Britain unity and peace, i.e. the same role that Shakespeare attributes to Octavius/James in the play. In Stuart historiography, Octavius' qualities of noble, well-intentioned and just ruler of his Empire are emphasized so as to gain unequivocal support for and endorsement of James/Caesar's political views. In Shakespeare's version, there are features of Octavius which reveal, at moments, the ambiguity of the future emperor of universal peace in contrast even with Shakespeare's main source for the play: Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*. Another important historical-mythical source that Shakespeare used was, of course, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in which the historian had already found a mythic genealogy for the monarchs of Britain in Brutus who was related to Aeneas and the founding of Rome. In doing this, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his chronicle, was creating a fusion of historical and mythological narratives that ensured the monarchs of England a direct lineage from the Roman emperors, regarded at all times as the paragons of kingship, which continued unchallenged up to Shakespeare's times. This specific literary and historical frame helped to assure Shakespeare and his contemporaries of a double ascendancy for the Stuart king and dynasty, one that is linked directly to Aeneas through Brutus and the other which derives from Augustus, the iconic emperor figure that James felt compelled to compare himself with in order to give proof of legitimacy for his rule (6).

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare introduces Antony to the audience as a Roman general doting "upon a tawny front", a captive of the Egyptian queen. His profession of love for Cleopatra threatens the most basic law of Jacobean culture and politics – Antony should represent the rightful, powerful Roman Emperor of the East and, instead, he degrades himself to the point of being dominated by the 'Other', which he was supposed to conquer, subjugate and civilize in order to maintain power. He fails as an agent of Roman civilization; he betrays the Roman political *ethos* and he loses his moral, military and imperial values. He subverts the relationship between colonizer and colonized and, in doing so, he proves himself inadequate, inferior to Julius Caesar, who had once dominated Egypt, and to Cleopatra, who represents both the exotic woman-subject and her conquered land. Antony should, like Julius Caesar before him, impersonate and perform his role as the embodiment of imperial power. It is Agrippa, who, recalling Julius Caesar's *affair* with Cleopatra does not suggest any loss of authority by 'great Caesar' and talks about Cleopatra using a geographical metaphor of fertile, colonized land.

> […] Royal wench!
> She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed;
> He plough'd her, and she cropp'd (Shakespeare 1954: 2.2.225-227)

On the contrary, Antony, rejecting the Roman cultural values, debases himself, positioning himself at the same level as the conquered Egyptian queen. He is no longer the virile male conqueror that possesses the conquered 'feminized' land and rules according to patriarchal laws. In politically submitting himself to the Egyptian Queen, publicly affirming her superiority, he also abdicates to his masculinity, to his virile dominant role of colonizer, a fundamental aspect of the imperial. Female Egypt robs Antony and his soldiers of their manhood and, just like a barbarian, slave Antony is now slave of the gypsies. He goes native and becomes a slave to his passions, a *trait* to be found among uncivilized men, but

it is certainly not his lust that dooms him. The danger for him is to embrace Egypt/Cleopatra's political ambition thus betraying the politics of imperialism. Defiantly Anthony affirms "Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the rang'd empire fall!" (Shakespeare 1954: 1.1.33-34). In making this statement, Antony calls for a complete separation of love from nationalism but his claim for the legitimacy of this relationship implies a complete subversion of cultural and political ideology of the time and this must, in new-historical terms, be 'contained'. Any Jacobean audience would have recognized instantly the delusional dream of Antony's politics. The desire to have sovereignty over one's sexual relations and therefore to construct a private world within the public is an inherently political act. The play clearly demonstrates that by desiring Cleopatra/Egypt rather than a Fulvia or an Octavia/Rome, Antony does not remove himself from political history, rather the consequences of his desire, embracing Cleopatra's political ambitions as well, change the course of Roman history itself. Cleopatra is Egypt and as such she embodies everything that is not imperial, be it Imperial Rome or imperial England, an exotic female with the power to pollute the civilized Roman world. It is perhaps difficult for a modern audience to see Cleopatra as such a threat to the political body but she embodies Egyptian fecundity, luxury and hedonism in sharp contrast to Rome's penury, harshness and self-denial marks of the just rulers of the world to be pursued for the common weal. Shakespeare endows Cleopatra's body with all the features, in Bakhtinian terms, of the 'carnevalesque' and defines her as the ultimate subject and object of illicit desire as Enobarbus's description suggests:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
> The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies; for vilest things
> Become themselves in her, that the holy priests
> Bless her when she is riggish (Shakespeare 1954: 2.2.34-39).

The sexual threat that Cleopatra represents to the political body is repeated in several different variations in the text. His sexual bond to Cleopatra strips Antony of his military judgment, deprives him of prowess in battle, and ultimately makes him commit suicide and Shakespeare, in this respect, follows faithfully Plutarch's description of the fall of Antony unlike other Elizabethan and Jacobean versions of the Antony and Cleopatra story – e.g. Daniel's *The Tragedie of Cleopatra* (Daniel 1599) just to name a text well-known to Shakespeare.

While leaving for Rome, Antony tells Cleopatra: "thou, residing here, goes yet with me, /And I, hence fleeting, here remain with thee" (Shakespeare 1954: 1.3.104-105). This common and rather stale lovers' exchange serves to remind the reader that in addition to the purely geographical shifts of place, there are also those of conceptual and ideological settings – the lovers' private world is constantly contrasted to the political space. Antony identifies the former with Egypt, and in preferring it to Rome is trying to privatize love, to locate his relationship with Cleopatra in a domestic arena, ignoring the fact that this territory is even more charged than that of Western Roman Empire with political and colonial ideology. When he is identified by Enobarbus with Egypt and metaphorically with "the old serpent Nile" in opposition to Octavius/James's identification with the Tiber/Thames, it is a definition of his degradation both cultural and political and it defines his new *status* as colonial subject. Becoming the 'Other' Antony voices his rejection of *Romanitas* as well as overtly manifesting his intention of opposing the imperial power embodied in his antagonist. When, at the play's beginning, Antony also attempts to expand his private Egyptian space so that it excludes the other, threatening world of masculine and imperial politics, he brings out the political threat to the established patriarchal ideology (7) and so signs, among other things, is own death warrant:

Cleopatra I'll set a bourn how far to be belov'd

Antony Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth (Shakespeare 1954: 1.1.16-17).

From the perspective of Roman patriarchy, and Jacobean political thought, Cleopatra has to be demonized and this can be achieved by defining her world as private while Antony, entering it and becoming a part of it, proves himself to be no longer a serious Roman general with all the superior virtues pertaining to *Romanitas*. Both inner and outer spaces are always invested with political connotations and can pose serious threat to the established and recognized political order, as Caesar makes clear indicating Egypt as place from which subversion can be practiced and as such it can never be merely a lovers' retreat.

Moreover, Antony courts Cleopatra with territorial and political gifts: he will "piece / Her opulent throne with kingdoms; all the East / shall call her mistress" (Shakespeare 1954: 3.6.8-11). He has been subdued by the "Egyptian gypsy" forsaking, for her sake, his duty as Roman Emperor with the transgression of political imperial laws and accepting to be unmanned by her. This representation of the debased colonizer could not have been made clearer by Shakespeare than when Antony affirms:

[…] here is my space,
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life
Is to do thus – when such a mutual pair
And such a twain can do't, in which I bind,
[…] pain of punishment, the world to weet
We stand up peerless (Shakespeare 1954: 1.1.34-40).

Both Antony and Caesar are aware that Egypt is not merely a private space and that its female, non-European nature only intensifies its challenge to imperial Rome:

> Antony […]My being in Egypt, Ceasar
>
> […]What was't to you?
>
> Caesar No more than my residing here at Rome
>
> Might be to you in Egypt. Yet, if you there
>
> Did practice on my state, your being in Egypt
>
> Might be my question (Shakespeare 1954: 2.2.40-44).

Patriarchal Rome contests Egyptian Cleopatra for the political threat she poses to the stability of the Empire and Antony's association with her means Rome is besieged because Antony, in Caesar's words, has been 'rioting in Alexandria'. As Caesar explains to his-friends Maecenas and Agrippa, Antony's misalliance with Egypt will contend for legitimacy authority over Rome. Octavius Caesar states that:

> I'th'market-place, on a tribunal silver'd,
>
> Cleopatra and himself in chairs of gold
>
> Were publicly enthron'd.
>
> […] Unto her
>
> He gave the establishment of Egypt; made her
>
> Of lower Syria, Cyprus, Lydia,
>
> Absolute queen […] (Shakespeare 1954: 3.6.3-11).

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, alongside the overlapping of territories and the incessant geographical shifts (8) and not only does the setting constantly shift but in each change of scene the audience is reminded of another one – in Egypt, Rome is evoked and vice versa – there is also the problem of mapping and defining the identity of the subjects and the rulers since different characters

strive to rise above their station – the Elizabethan *degree* – like Cleopatra or sink below it like Antony. They struggle to assert an inner unity of being. In the beginning, despite being described as a "doting general", Antony thinks he is in control of what he regards as the opposition between politics and pleasure. He attempts to possess Octavia trying to bond himself legally to imperial patriarchy while still having the oriental seductress Cleopatra through an 'illicit' relationship. He alternatively views Egypt as his retreat from Roman politics and a place to consolidate his bid for power. He oscillates between Cleopatra's territory and Caesar's. As the play proceeds he is no longer in command of such geographical division. His position in Rome and Egypt becomes unstable and manifests itself as a dislocation of personality "I / Have lost my way forever", "I have fled myself I have lost command" (Shakespeare 1954: 3.11.3-4, 24). He also says: "Authority melts from me"; he cries "Have you no ears? I am / Antony yet" (Shakespeare 1954: 3.13.92-93). He is sadly aware of the change in himself: without power, without space, without Rome and without Cleopatra, Antony disintegrates and deliquescence becomes a late theme of the dramatic verse.

It is important to note that Cleopatra's transformation into whore and the witch occurs precisely at this point: what Antony perceives as a betrayal reduces Cleopatra's "infinite variety" to patriarchal and racist stereotype of the deviant woman, the outsider. At this point the real conflict and struggle for power is between Cleopatra and Caesar. Her resistance and opposition ignite the conflict latent between the two lovers. The three-way struggle marks shifts of places and boundaries by land and by sea. Antony perceives his own marginality and Cleopatra's refusal to share her space affirms yet again her subversion of roles between colonizer and colonized, centre and periphery, and inner and outer dimensions. With the collapse of Antony's role, both at a private and political level, with the world, as he conceived it, lost, the structural shifts of scene of the play and the geographical movement cease. The boundary is set. Such a development is dependent on the treatment of Cleopatra at this point in

the play: she gradually loses command of her own space: as a ruler of Egypt her space is now threatened by the expansionist's designs of Octavius. Her fear of invasion now includes her as a woman threatened also by her lover and this is shown by her stasis, her reluctance to move from her territory. The inconstant and variable Cleopatra may still threaten the boundaries between male and female, political and private worlds, subvert the roles of dominance and subalternity but now she remains geographically stationary, denoting, clearly, her 'Otherness'. She still fluctuates between establishing her emotional and political space. She progressively finds it harder and harder to fix the boundaries of her own territory in relation to Antony. This shift is now fully displayed at an emotional level: she can accept to be part of Antony's life as the female subject or she can enter politics impersonating the chaste woman as Elizabeth I had done so as to rule England before her. She will always stand outside Roman society as 'foul Egyptian' the very personification of the deviant woman – exotic, coloured and racially inferior, the sexually deviant colonized.

The last act appears to resolve the various dichotomies, tensions, oppositions of the play; Shakespeare's style turns into that of classical tragedy. It appears that Cleopatra is tamed, the wanton gypsy embodies the qualities of a good Roman wife, the queen is stripped of any authority, deprived of imperial signs, reduced tamed femininity "no more but e'en a woman, and commanded / By such poor passion as the maid that milks" (Shakespeare 1954: 4.16.74-75).

The variable woman is now marble constant. The witch gives way to the penitent woman as she tries to do "what's brave, /what's noble [...] after the high Roman fashion" (Shakespeare 1954: 4.16.88-89). Cleopatra also lets her own forceful identification slip for the first time. She does not accept Caesar's Rome, which remains a threat:

    Shall they hoist me up

    And show me to the shouting varletry

> Of censuring Rome? Rather a ditch in Egypt
>
> Be gentle grave unto me! (Shakespeare 1954: 5.2.54-57).

At this stage, Cleopatra performs her last defiant unruly woman act. Having lost power she cancels her political defeat with her suicide – a last act of rebellion and resistance to imperial power as well as show of independence. Her own body, at once the body of the colonised and the body politic of Egypt, is not conquered: it is the last space to be withdrawn from Roman patriarchal control. Her liberty is possible in the absence of real territory, in the absence of maps of geographical and historical power, in the absence of conflict between clashes of civilization and empires.

Cleopatra acknowledges Caesar as "the sole sir o'th' world" (Shakespeare 1954: 5.2.116) but powerless, she also states "What should I stay -/ In this vile world?" (Shakespeare 1954: 5.2.303-305). The narrative of masculinity and imperialism regains control but Cleopatra's final performance not only defies patriarchal power and cheats Caesar of his triumph in Rome but also denies any complete subjugation to colonization while showing a way of opposition and resistance to the political power of invaders.

NOTES

1. The term 'early modern', which came into widespread use in literary criticism only during and after the 1980s, is preferred here to the term 'Renaissance'. 'Early modern' is more precise in describing a period of English linguistic history. This has proved useful in the different disciplines of history and literary criticism which see the past as a forebear of the present.

2. Regarding the study of sexuality in Shakespeare's period and its relationship with cultural modes of that time, see Dollimore 1994.

3. This use of the geographical metaphor of discovery had already become a literary *topos* by the end of the 16th century.

4. Regarding the importance of the endorsement of James's reign by poets of Stuart England see the work of Jonathan Goldberg 1983.

5. Antony Munday uses Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* as main source to write his own *History of 'British' Kings*.

6. Kevin Sharpe devoted his life and career to historical scholarship on Elizabethan and early Stuart period producing the 'authoritative' text on the reign of Charles I. His greatest merit was to introduce, in the historiography of the period, revisionism and debates about revisionism applying the same approach to the histories of politics, religion and society. He devoted critical attention also to cultural practices and texts advocating that they were not mere reflections but constructions of political attitudes and arrangements. Sadly, he died in 2012 leaving his work unfinished.

7. In the first three acts of the play, there are 23 changes of scene and shifts of location between the two empires whereas in Act 4 there are 15 changes of locale but all within Egypt. In Act 5, changes of places are confined to the area of Cleopatra's monument.

8. This quotation from the Bible bears so many implications for Jacobean England, including theological ones alongside the self-evident political ones, that an entire article should be devoted to its analysis. Suffice to say that it is highest expression of Stuart propaganda implying the peaceful political and religious re-union of the British Isles under the only legitimate monarch, James I, who had been endowed with Divine Right.

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Fabio Luppi

Yeats' Imagined Ireland and Postcolonial Theory

Abstract I: In the light of various authoritative definitions of the word 'culture', such as those expressed by Edward Said and Raymond Williams, the present paper investigates W. B. Yeats' idea of Irish culture and explores the poet's position regarding several crucial concepts which would eventually be taken up in ground-breaking studies of post-colonial theories, such as the "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), "imaginary/invented countries" (Kiberd 1995) and the "un-homed condition of the artist" (Bhabha 1994) in a postcolonial / postmodern society. This paper intends to explore the often confusing and misleading use of fixed notions of 'culture', 'identity' and 'tradition' when employed to describe complex systems, and to show Yeats' conscious and deliberate or culture-bound use of such terms in his own definition of Irish culture.

Abstract II: Alla luce di definizioni della parola 'cultura', come quelle espresse da Edward Said e Raymond Williams, questo saggio illustra l'idea che W. B. Yeats aveva della cultura nazionale irlandese in relazione a concetti divenuti poi centrali per gli studi postcoloniali, quali quelli di 'invenzione della tradizione', di 'paesi immaginari o inventati' e della posizione 'un-homed' dell'artista. L'intento è di evidenziare i limiti di definizioni statiche di sistemi complessi e ibridi, e mostrare quanto Yeats fosse cosciente della rigidità di parole quali 'cultura', 'identità' e 'tradizione', come risulta dalle scelte che operò nella sua personale definizione della cultura irlandese.

Defining Culture

W. H. Sewell (2013) acutely pointed out that the word 'culture' has two principal meanings. On the one hand, it is a theoretical concept in opposition to other aspects of social life, such as the economy or politics; on the other, 'culture' stands for a concrete set of beliefs and practices and is generally felt to be the expression of a given society. However, this second definition implies that the term is rather ambiguous and arbitrary since a distinction of cultural identities is often the product of political decisions and power struggles rather than any neat and distinguishable factor. This contested word and its two meanings have been much discussed from the very beginning of the debate on cultural studies.

According to Edward Said "culture includes aesthetic forms, popular stock of lore and specialized knowledge" (Said 1993: xii). As for Raymond Williams, culture "i) describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; ii) […] indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general; iii) […] describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (Williams 1985: 90). Both Said and Williams quote from Matthew Arnold (*Culture and Anarchy*), not only criticizing him (as they often do) but also finding some positive elements in his argument. Said underlines that Arnold conceived culture as a "concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought" (Said 1993: xiii); Williams remarks that in *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold criticized "the National obsession with wealth and production" (Williams 1980: 5) and in so doing he arrived at a definition of culture which implies "the sense of more things in life than economy, the opposition to manipulation, the commitment to an extending popular education" (Williams 1980: 5).

A Class Distinction

It is difficult to say what W. B. Yeats intended by 'Irish culture', and to understand what his idea of Ireland was, as Yeats did not have a single vision of the nation. His ideas changed over the years. However, it is possible to identify points of contact with the definitions quoted above. The social classes Yeats referred to in identifying Ireland and Irish culture were those described in his poems "Under Ben Bulben" (Yeats 1989: 333) and "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" (Yeats 1989: 328). He wrote: "Irish poets learn your trade,/ Sing whatever is well made [...]".

These first two lines can be read in relation to the definitions of culture given by Said and Williams. By comparing them with the quotations above, it can be said that for Yeats the 'aesthetic forms' and 'artistic activity' (the trade of the Irish poet), which are highly relevant to the concept of culture, have to reproduce 'the best that has been known and thought' ("whatever is well made"); they represent an 'elevating element' of society. Yeats continues:

> Sing the peasantry, and then
> Hard-riding country gentlemen,
> The holiness of monks, and after
> Porter-drinkers' randy laughter;
> Sing the lords and ladies gay
> That were beaten into the clay
> Through seven heroic centuries.

Before commenting on these lines, it is useful to add a further quotation, this time from the second of the aforementioned poems:

> John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
> All that we did, all that we said or sang
> Must come from contact with the soil

[…]
We three alone in modern times had brought
Everything down to that sole test again,
Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.

Two main points are made here, the first of which deals with class distinctions. From the lines above, it is evident that for Yeats the social classes representing Ireland were the peasants ("the peasantry") or the poor people ("the beggar-man"), and a supposed aristocracy ("country gentlemen"; "the lords and ladies gay"; "the noble […]-man"). In fact Yeats was convinced that an important contribution to popular poetry derived from the two social classes called here into question "Aristocracies have made beautiful manners […] and the countrymen have made beautiful stories and beliefs […] and the artists have made all the rest […]" (Yeats 2007: 183) as he wrote in the essay "Poetry and Tradition" included in the collection *The Cutting of an Agate*.

Referring again to the quotations by Williams and Said, it can be surmised that the Irish literature Yeats refers to derives its themes from the "popular stock of lore" and "indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general". However, it is not, perhaps, *that* 'general', as it refers just to the rural folk and to the gentry represented by the Ascendancy ("dream of the noble and the beggar-man"), while one social class, the bourgeoisie, is left out. Yeats proposed two different models for Irish identity; the first saw peasants and poor people as the social class embodying and continuing the oldest and most traditional habits of the authentic "national race". The second was the ruling class to which he belonged, the Protestant Ascendancy. He thought this social class could usher forth a new era in Irish history, paradoxically leading to a de-Anglicization of the Island and a new start for an independent country. The paradox here consists of the fact that the Ascendancy derived from those rich families of English origin who had settled in Ireland from the Elizabethan Age on, and become great landowners thanks to

the dispossession of large holdings previously belonging to Roman Catholic (Irish) people.

In indicating these two different social classes as the only ones which could rebuilt Irish identity, Yeats, to a certain extent, was not very far from what Williams saw as the positive point in Arnold's definition of culture. The "obsession with wealth and production" is a value expressed by the middle-class and upper middle-class. Culture has nothing to do with the pursuit of economic goals because it represents a "sense of more things in life than economy, […] and a commitment to an extending popular education" (Williams 1980: 5). This refusal to consider the middle class as a distinctive element of Irish culture is expressed by Yeats in the manifestoes of the Irish National Theatre, published in the periodicals *Samhain* and *Beltaine* (1). Here Yeats declared that in order to represent Irish culture, Irish theatre should reject the so-called 'theatre of the drawing-room' because "the life of the drawing-room, the life represented in most plays of the ordinary theatre of today, […] differs very little all over the world, and has […] little to do with the national spirit" (Yeats 2003: 10) (2). This means that Yeats refused to write, and, as one of the managers of the Abbey Theatre, even to stage, what could be defined as bourgeois drama (3).

Several authors and politicians of the time shared this view and referred to this social class distinction in order to identify the authentic characteristics of the Irish people. President Eamon De Valera's speech of 1943, about four years after Yeats' death, is highly significant:

> The *ideal* Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we *dreamed of*, would be the home of a people who *valued material wealth only as a basis for right living*, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose *countryside* would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose *fields and villages* would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children,

the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age (4).

De Valera is apparently concerned here with the same values Yeats refers to in the poems quoted above. In this speech he focuses his attention on the countryside and on the villages, declaring that Irish culture represents "something more than economy". This view is certainly informed by an opposition to English mercantilism and an English focus on economic power, and by the traditional image of Ireland as a country whose economy is based on agriculture and sheep farming. What emerges from these quotations is a common idea of the characteristics that make Ireland. In the view of this political or artistic élite, Irish culture is described in similar terms; its identity is a fixity, based on a pure tradition.

Tradition: an Invented Definition

This leads us to question another keyword used and discussed by Said (1993) in relation to 'culture' and 'tradition'. Indeed, the debate regarding 'identity', together with another related term such as authenticity, informs a certain number of well-known critical works: *Inventing Ireland* (Kiberd 1995), *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Castle 2001) and *Inauthentic* (Cheng 2004). It must be noted that this debate was not introduced by Said for the first time, but had already been exhaustively discussed by at least three other authors in texts which Said describes as groundbreaking, namely *The Invention of Tradition* (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), *Imagining India* (Nilekani 1988) and *The Invention of Africa* (Mudimbe 1988). In *Culture and Imperialism* Said reoriented this debate along the lines laid out by cultural studies, shifting the focus from political and economic matters to more philosophical, cultural and literary issues. This long cultural debate helps us to explore Yeats' ideas and his specific use of keywords such as "culture", "tradition" and "identity".

Raymond Williams had early on illustrated the dangers involved in the misleading association of the word "tradition" with the adjective "national", as well as considering the concept of 'culture' as synonymous with 'nation' and 'tradition'. This association leads to a misinterpretation of the words in question and to false, and potentially conflictual, attitudes implicit in the concept of 'national identity'. The word 'identity' conveys the idea of something static or monolithic, a sense of fixity. This false and distorted concept of a tradition strictly linked to national identity is exposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and by Martin Bernal (1987) (5). Their studies "have accentuated the extraordinary influence of today's anxieties and agendas on the pure (even purged) images we construct of a privileged, genealogically useful past in which we exclude unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives" (Said 1993: 16).

Yeats' ideas of how tradition and identity relate to culture are controversial. However, the poet's project for a new Irish National Theatre and his dream of an Irish State are based upon a solid awareness of the cultural and historical implications of his work. Yeats knew that "romantic Ireland's dead and gone"(6), and was aware of the fact that the imagined world he referred to did not exist and had never existed, at least in the terms he portrayed it. In an interview he was provoked by a journalist who intentionally defined him as Anglo-Irish rather than Irish. Yeats' answer shows that he was aware of the hybridity of Irish culture, and of the artificiality of the attempt to recreate the "Irish race". He replied that "Anglo-Ireland is already Ireland. You may revive the Gaelic language but you cannot revive Gaelic civilization. We have not only English but European thoughts and customs in our heads and in our habits. We could not, if we would, give them up. You may revive the Gaelic language, you cannot revive the Gaelic race" (Yeats 2000: 257).

In the conclusion to the same interview, Yeats explained what he meant by his earlier statements. The "Irish race" is made up of different influences; its roots, like any other nation's roots, result from the combination or the interaction

of different peoples. Identities are hybrid: "The pure Englishman came to Ireland under Cromwell and married into the mixed Irish race. The pure Gael from the Blasket Islands comes to Dublin and goes into the civil service; he will marry into the race in his turn. The Irish people are as much a unity as the German, French, or English people, though many strands have gone to the making of it" (Yeats 2000: 257-258). Irish tradition is thus a hybrid tradition. However, it should be called Irish and not Anglo Irish, because this is what Ireland had become after centuries of imperial subjugation. To some extent, Yeats had already acquired that which Bhabha would later describe as a "sense of the hybridity of imagined countries" (Bhabha 1994: 7); indeed, he had embraced "a plural philosophy […], celebrated the hybridity of the national experience" (Kiberd 1995: 7).

This awareness was not something that the Irish poet achieved only late in life. In this respect, what Yeats wrote in 1908 is significant: "We sought to make a more subtle rhythm, a more organic form, than that of the older Irish poets who wrote in English, but always to remember certain ardent ideas and high attitudes of mind which were the nation itself, to our belief, so far as a nation can be summarized in the intellect" (Yeats 2007: 181). He clearly knew how difficult, if not impossible, it is to define a nation, a culture or a tradition.

It is indeed impossible to define a nation that has been dominated by empires, as "because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through the imagination" (Said, 1993: 271). Moreover, two opposing forces are at work in this context: "At the level of practical politics, the 'green' and 'orange' essentialists seized control, and protected their singular versions of identity on either side of a patrolled border" (Kiberd 1995: 7). Yeats, referring to the Fenian leader John O'Leary and to the image of Irish art and life given by Irish artists in the past, observed that "ideal Ireland, perhaps from this out an imaginary Ireland, in whose service I labour, will always be in many essentials their Ireland" (Yeats 2007: 180). This sentence is highly significant for at least two reasons: firstly, the adjectives 'ideal' and 'imaginary' are

attributed to Ireland, and secondly, the author attributes a possessive adjective ("their") to his country, allowing for the possibility of declining Ireland in different ways. There is Yeats' Ireland and also O'Leary's Ireland. Yeats was aware that Ireland, as the Gaelic League or the Irish National Theatre intended it, was something that did not exist: "We three [Lady Gregory, Synge and Yeats] have conceived an Ireland which will remain imaginary" (7). It must be noted that also De Valera, in the speech quoted above, referred to an "ideal Ireland" and to an "Ireland we dreamt of".

Although Yeats was conscious that his idea of Ireland would be partial and artificial, he worked and fought for the construction of a new national identity based on supposedly traditional values. This process is evident and stated explicitly in his *Autobiographies*, where the poet remembers Sligo and relates how in his childhood and youth he had begun to compare a sweet familiar Ireland to a cold impersonal London, accepting the binary oppositions created by the empire, but at the same time feeling that the situation was much more complex than a simple dichotomy.

What Yeats did not do – intentionally and purposefully – was to "provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of identity" (Said 1993: xxviii). While he avoided this, he was aware that the words 'identity' and 'nation' are approximations and merely represent a static view of a complex whole. Nevertheless, he questioned the production and the creation of a national identity, following "the very concepts of homogeneous national cultures" which are nowadays "in a profound process of redefinition" (Bhabha 1994: 7). Indeed, Yeats' position is not as static and traditional as one may think at first; although at the beginning of his career his "ethnographic imagination combines the desire for an accurate cultural description with a reluctance to achieve the kind of distance that would allow for the separation of observer and observed" (Castle 2001: 63). With the loss of hope in his initial project, he eventually acquired a deep sense of understanding of the implications deriving from his

own point of view. We could say that his privileged position as an artist allowed him to see things from a distance, with a detached attitude.

The Artist and his Liminal Position

According to Raymond Williams, the main mistake made by Arnold consisted in identifying and confusing culture with familiarity. Such a practice reduces the chance to implement culture, making culture a static element incapable of improvement. Accordingly, cultural practices unfamiliar to a society are also seen as dangerous. Williams argues that 'culture' does not necessarily represent familiar habits, but should represent "the best that has been known and thought". This fundamental distinction between 'culture' and 'familiarity' can be seen as the first step in deconstructing the idea of cultures including the concepts of country, state, nationalism and national tradition. The word 'familiarity' has strong affinities with the word 'home', and what can be more familiar than 'home'? Bhabha (1994) describes the privileged position of the artist as "un-homed", estranged in every context. In order to describe something and avoid influencing the experiment, an artist should become "un-homed". Through this condition the artist goes beyond the "binary logic through which identities of difference are often constructed" (Bhabha 1994: 5), beyond what Vincent Cheng (1995) defines the artificial logic of the "binary trap". If the artist wants to be objective and to describe the condition of a post–colonial country adequately, all familiarity with the subject must be positioned at a considerable distance.

Being "un-homed" is the condition of the postmodern/postcolonial author. Feeling un-homed in one's own country is a "privileged condition" because it enables the author to project him/herself as 'other'. This status is not constructed or artificial; it is a product of the colonial experience and it is produced by the logic imposed by the dominant powers which tend to see everything in binary terms. Following the perverse and simplified logic of such a

distinction, which ignores all possible alternatives, the subject inevitably ends up conceiving, erroneously, the world in terms of oppositions. Once these oppositions have been imposed by the empire and accepted by the colonies, the colonised are trapped in static definitions. Even for the colonised, it becomes difficult not to play "by the same terms as the binary system" (Cheng 1995: 47), albeit with reversed values. Moreover, all binary oppositions inevitably lead to oversimplification.

Yet, after decades and centuries of imperialism something has drastically changed. Bhabha states that new generations of artists, who have grown up in once dominated nations and been educated in complex subjugated societies, have naturally achieved an 'un-homed' condition, which can be considered as a natural reaction to the complex hybrid situation of colonised nations. Being at close, forced contact with native, colonised and colonizing cultures, many artists have acquired a much deeper understanding of their position which goes well beyond conceiving the world in binary terms. As Said puts it, "gone are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialistic enterprise" (Said 1993: xxviii).

From this perspective, Yeats, at the end of his career as a senator of the Irish Free State, was un-homed in his own country, and estranged both from the colonizer's idea of Ireland and from the colony's self-image as an outraged state. He was in favour of Irish independence, but he was also a Protestant and part of the so-called Ascendancy. He dreamt of an Ireland that had never really existed and that, by the end of his life, it was clearly impossible to (re)create. His position had changed over the years: he moved from the invention of an Ireland based upon the idealization and transfiguration of the peasantry and of the people of the West, to the idea of an Ireland led by the Ascendancy. The latter was represented by the Irish Big House, the political symbol of its own status, a centre of culture in a newly-invented tradition where the landlord class provided the idealized image of a gentry ruling the land from its country

mansion. Yeats saw the Big Mansion House in Coole, run by Lady Gregory's family, as the icon of this ideal conservative country whose social order was guaranteed by the great landowners (8). The Big House, indeed, was a recognized symbol of a pre-existing order and it is no coincidence that several mansions were destroyed or burnt and severely damaged during the civil war between 1919 and 1923 (Dooley 2001: 174-196) (9).

It must be added that, as with the Irish political situation of the beginning of the twentieth century, any diametric opposition between two different ideals is an oversimplification of a complicated matter. The history of Irish independence is much more complex than an empire-*vs*-colony opposition. The Irish Civil War saw the fratricidal struggle between the forces of the Free State and those of the Irish Republic; the Unionists were, in turn, different from those who, though being Protestant, like Yeats, longed for an independent country (10). This means that there were at least four different views of a possible future for the country.

Yeats was aware of his problematic position and of the fact that 'his' Ireland, if it had ever existed (11), was lost. At the end of his career, he represented this bitter conclusion in his last play, *Purgatory*, where the Big House of the Protestant Ascendancy is destroyed. Gregory Castle refers to it at the end of a chapter dedicated to Yeats in *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*: "The play is an eloquent memorial to the Anglo-Irish Big House culture whose passing Yeats had been mourning for over twenty years" (Castle 2001: 95).

Castle's words should be considered alongside what Bhabha writes in *The Location of Culture*. A remarkable aspect of *Purgatory* is the fact that the only two characters in the play see the scene of the abandoned and destroyed house from a distance. They are estranged, beyond the time and the action of the play; they are in a marginal, or liminal, position (12). In Bhabha's terms, it can be said that the two characters of Yeats' play are "un-homed". This is not only true in a literal sense, since their house has been destroyed, but also in the

metaphorical sense. They have the chance to contemplate the situation in which they were once involved. From this point of view, their role is similar to that of the postcolonial writer whose liminal condition, according to Bhabha, allows him/her to relocate 'home' and 'the world'. The setting of *Purgatory* represents the moment of "aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge" (Bhabha 1994: 19). The two protagonists of the play clearly see the representation of Yeats' ideal Ireland, of their own world, but at the same time they are spectators of its final ruin.

Conclusion

Bhabha sheds light on the fact that all cultural and postcolonial discourse from Williams, Said, Hobsbawm and Ranger to minor or more recent scholars, inevitably tends to question fixed and static definitions of cultures and identities. At the beginning of this paper, an attempt was made to bring together these definitions of culture with reference to the eminent scholars quoted. At the same time, they have been matched with Yeats' plans for a new theatre in Ireland. Other key-terms such as 'nation' and 'tradition' have, of necessity, been brought into discussion. Though Yeats was conscious of the fact that language and mental habits naturally tend to create artificial concepts, he also felt the need to name things and define controversial realities with labels, an operation that inevitably lead to oversimplification. In fact Yeats resorted to simplistic terms such as "Irish race" and proposed a project that could neither reconcile opposing views, nor be seen as a solution to the binary oppositions created by colonialism. He was aware of the artificiality of his own personal construction, of his invented Ireland, yet he needed something that could help him shape his vision. Being able to see things from a distance and to discern between imaginary over-simplified ideas of a country or of a culture did not prevent him from taking sides in the dispute and from proposing his own artificial dream.

NOTES

1. Now collected in Yeats 2003.

2. Yeats admitted the possibility of accepting Irish plays dealing with the same bourgeois issues tackled by great modern European playwrights like Ibsen and Hauptmann, but his scepticism is evident: "We can, if but the dramatists arrive, take up the life of our drawing-rooms, and see if there is something characteristic there, something which our nationality may enable us to express better than others, and so create plays of that life and means to play them as truthful as a play of Hauptmann's or of Ibsen's upon the German or Scandinavian stage" (Yeats 2003: 108-109).

3. A perfect example of this change can be seen in his shift in perspective towards the audience of his own theatre. At the beginning of his career Yeats proposed what he called "a People's theatre" (see Yeats 2003). This project was not to be understood as popular theatre, but as a theatre representing Irish people, an image of Irishness. His plays were not popular at all; indeed, they became more and more difficult with the passing of time. In an essay entitled "What is popular poetry?" Yeats underlined the confusion created by the term. He wrote: "what we call popular poetry never came from the people at all" (Yeats 2007: 7).

4. This speech was given on March 17, 1943. Emphasis added.

5. Actually Said rephrases Martin Bernal's words saying that "since Greek writers themselves openly acknowledged their culture hybrid's past, European philologists acquired the ideological habit of passing over these embarrassing passages without comment, in the interest of Attic purity" (Said 1993: 15).

6. This is a line from the famous poem, "September 1913" (Yeats 1989: 107).

7. Yeats, quoted by Castle (Castle 2001: 137). Castle adds that "Yeats epitomizes the dilemma of the Irish writer faced with the necessity of

constructing an imaginary nation from within a colonial context" (Castle 2001: 175).

8. See also the poem "Coole Park, 1929" (Yeats 1989: 246).

9. This is what Yeats described in his last play, *Purgatory* (Yeats 2001).

10. From his childhood and youth, Yeats felt the inevitable presence of these contrasts that were much more complex than a binary opposition. Here is one of the many examples of what he perceived as a young boy: "Everyone I knew well in Sligo despised Nationalists and Catholics, but all disliked England with a prejudice that had come down perhaps from the days of the Irish Parliament" (Yeats 1999: 60).

11. I am not quite sure Yeats really believed that Ireland as he conceived it had really existed. He thought that a different Ireland had existed, but that it had been destroyed and replaced by a corrupt country when the English colonized it. However, what he wanted to re/create was a new order by recovering parts of an imagined lost Ireland, together with the spirit of leadership represented by the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. He was aware of the oversimplification inherent in his occasionally neat references to a glorious, pure past.

12. A term which, rather significantly, implies ambiguity and disorientation.

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Stevenson in the Pacific: A Problematic View of Cultures and Imperialisms

Abstract I: In *Culture and Imperialism* Said examines the relationship between the European cultural production and the growth and maintenance of colonial empires. The fictional sub-genre that probably most promoted imperial ideology is the adventure romance, with its triumphant view of the deeds of European pioneers. R. L. Stevenson was celebrated as one of its undisputed masters but, surprisingly, his late writings set in the South Pacific show a very critical attitude towards Western imperialism. My article will offer a postcolonial reading of some of these works, whose value has often been underestimated and which need to be seen from a new perspective.

Abstract II: In *Cultura e imperialismo* Said analizza lo stretto rapporto tra le espressioni culturali europee e l'espansione degli imperi coloniali. Il sotto-genere narrativo che probabilmente più di ogni altro promosse l'impresa coloniale è il romanzo d'avventura, con la sua trionfante rappresentazione delle gesta dei pionieri. R. L. Stevenson è tra i suoi indiscussi maestri, eppure negli ultimi lavori ambientati nel Sud Pacifico egli appare molto critico nei confronti dell'imperialismo occidentale. Il presente articolo si propone di offrire una lettura postcoloniale di alcune di queste opere, che sono state spesso sottostimate e necessitano di una nuova visione prospettica.

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* stresses a notion of culture that, far from being an aseptic and enclosed area outside the realm of politics, is rather a powerful force participating in the imperial project. He suggests that travelogues, ethnographic works and narrative fiction are all made of 'stories' alike, which

contributed to representing strange regions of the world to Western readers, informing their knowledge (Said 1994: xii-xiii). Stories actually articulated and modelled the public's view of these faraway countries, justifying the European presence and rule there. The 'realist novel', in particular, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, seems to be strictly connected to the rise of the Empire, as contended by Said:

> Of all the major literary forms, the novel is the most recent, its emergence the most datable, its occurrence the most Western, its normative pattern of social authority the most structured; imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that is impossible, I would argue, to read one without in some way dealing with the other (Said 1994: 70-1).

Robert Louis Stevenson has been considered as one of the undisputed masters of the adventure novel or adventure romance, one of the sub-genres that most contributed to the construction of the triumphant identity of Western pioneers and celebrated their deeds, but from his very beginnings with *Treasure Island* he did not follow the traditional pattern problematizing the notion of adventure itself. He also questioned Western man's superiority by unleashing Dr Jekyll's 'primitive' self and showing how Mr Hyde was as much part of his identity as his 'respectable' side. It is Stevenson's Pacific production, however, which shows his vocal criticism of the colonial enterprise. In this article I will demonstrate that Stevenson can be numbered among the first European writers who subverted the myth of Western imperialism. Not only did he dismantle colonial literary clichés, but he also acknowledged the viewpoint of the indigenous 'other' and the legitimacy of resistance to imperial power. A postcolonial reading of these works will therefore shed light on an unprecedented Stevenson: a perceptive and committed author who was able to envisage issues of great relevance to the present global world.

In the winter between 1887 and 1888 Stevenson was living at Saranac in the Adirondack mountains (in the far north of New York State) with his American wife Fanny (Hammond 1984: 11). He was the well-known author of *Treasure Island* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,* which had brought him fame in Europe and America. For this reason he was contacted by the newspaper magnate Samuel McClure, who offered him 10,000 dollars for a series of letters from the Caribbean or the South Seas he would then syndicate for publication in the British and American press (Hillier 1989: 15). Stevenson chose the South Seas for the fascination those regions had always exerted on him since his childhood, but also because of their mild climate, which could help his lung condition. He sailed from San Francisco with his family in May 1888. This was the beginning of a nomadic life in the Pacific, which included three cruises on different ships and several long stays on numerous islands, among which the Marquesas, Tahiti, the Paumotu (or Tuamotu), the Hawaii, and the Gilberts. The Stevensons finally settled down in Samoa, where the writer died in 1894.

Stevenson's South Sea correspondence raised the public's expectations. In a missive to the writer, his friend Edmund Gosse wrote that since the times of Byron in Greece "nothing had appealed to the ordinary man as so picturesque as that you [Stevenson] should be in the South Seas" (Rennie 1998: xxvi). The letters appeared throughout 1991 in the London *Black and White* and in the *New York Sun*, but their publication was suddenly interrupted for they resulted too impersonal and even tedious. This was not what the public wanted and they wanted *Treasure Island* again. Everybody, including his usually supportive wife and his mentor Sidney Colvin had tried to bring him back to the comfortable path of romance and even sabotaged his writing, but to no avail. While travelling, Stevenson kept a journal with the passion of a professional researcher. It was filled with information, comments, reports from his local sources and Polynesian stories. Since he was writing on the spot, the letters were continuously amended by new observations, parallels and details. Then, Stevenson began

considering them as chapters of a longer text: the most comprehensive book on the South Seas ever written. The seriousness of Stevenson's purpose accounts for his continuous revisions and search for analogies or contrasts between different populations, and even between his Scottish background and the Polynesian one. However, he will never succeed in completing his project. What remains today is the essay *In the South Seas*, published posthumously in 1896: basically, a chronological collection of most of his South Sea letters edited by a sceptical Sidney Colvin.

Despite its fragmentariness, probably due to the lack of the author's final supervision, the book is very different from the usual travelogues from the South Pacific. Stevenson's approach does not conform to the so-called 'panoptic gaze' of the Western explorer, in David Spurr's words, who wants to classify and control everything, often on the basis of a short visit, and "who looks upon the colonized but denies the colonized the privilege of 'looking back'" (Keown 2007: 34). Rather than controlling his material, Stevenson seems to be controlled and ruled by it. Realizing the demanding nature of his subject matter – a multi-faceted and complex 'other' – Stevenson turns into a pupil, attending a new school in a foreign country. His attitude is one of openness to listening and learning.

First of all Stevenson doesn't talk about the indigenous 'other' as an indistinct crowd, but he gets to know people personally, visits them in their houses, listens to and communicates with them trying every possible language. Said affirmed that the colonizer describes the imperial possessions "as usefully *there*, anonymous and collective", that is, "as people without History" (Said 1994: 63-64). This does not apply to Stevenson, who presents a gallery of figures, from chiefs and kings to ordinary people, as individuals, characterised and named. In *In the South Seas* he criticizes the easy generalizations and homogenisations of explorers and travellers, who write a book on the base of very brief contacts with foreign cultures:

> A ship of war comes to a haven, anchors, lands a party, receives and returns a visit, and the captain writes a chapter on the manners of the island. It is not considered what class is mostly seen. Yet we should not be pleased if a Lascar foremast hand were to judge England by the ladies who parade Ratcliffe Highway, and the gentlemen who share with them their hire (Stevenson 2009: 34).

Herman Melville himself, considered as a connoisseur of the South Seas, spent only one month in the Marquesas where he set his first novel *Typee* (although he extends the period to 4 months in the book). He didn't keep a journal and couldn't speak the local language. His story, written after his return, relies widely on memory and imagination. Furthermore, all the material on indigenous politics and culture that he inserts in the book is taken from second-hand sources: people that, as Stevenson suggests, probably wrote a book on the customs of a population after receiving and returning just one visit.

Stevenson explores many issues ranging from the proverbial generosity of Polynesians (a legend widely romanticised in novels, which he brought down to reality) to the dissolute sexual customs of Polynesian women (which he sees not as a natural trait of that culture but induced by the arrival of male Europeans), from the reasons for the increasing death-rate of the indigenous population in post-contact times to their obsessive fear of darkness and spirits. The best example of Stevenson's attitude in approaching the 'other' is his treatment of a subject which constitutes an ultimate border between 'civilization' and 'savagery': cannibalism. The widespread presence of anthropophagy in the Pacific (from the Marquesas to New Guinea, from New Zealand to Hawaii, all over Melanesia and, episodically, in Tahiti and the Gilberts) triggers his search for the possible causes of this phenomenon, which he attributes to the need of integrating a diet poor of animal proteins in times of famine or over-population:

How shall we account for the universality of the practice over so vast an area, among people of such varying civilisation, and, with whatever intermixture, of such different blood? What circumstance is common to them all, but that they lived on islands destitute, or very nearly so, of animal food? I can never find it in my appetite that man was meant to live on vegetables only. When our stores ran low among the islands, I grew to weary for the recurrent day when economy allowed us to open another tin of miserable mutton. And in at least one ocean language, a particular word denotes that a man is "hungry for fish" having reached that stage when vegetables can no longer satisfy, and his soul, like those of the Hebrews in the desert, begins to lust after flesh-pots. Add to this the evidences of over-population and imminent famine already adduced, and I think we see some ground of indulgence for the island cannibal (Stevenson 2009: 63-64).

From a practical survival need, they passed to ritual anthropophagy, whose traces are found everywhere in the lives of those peoples: religious festivals, celebrations for victories over enemies, retributions of wrongs, punishments for crimes. If the lack of animal protein in luxuriant islands such as the Hawaii and the Marquesas applies to times of over-population or famine, it is physiological on atolls such as the Gilberts or the Paumotu. Stevenson dismantles the Western tourist myth of the atoll as the earthly Eden, demonstrating what an inhospitable, uncomfortable and dangerous home is for man a ring of broken coral and sand in the middle of the ocean. Not a blade of grass appears, nor a grain of humus. You basically cannot grow vegetables if you don't import earth. Vegetation is scarce, apart from some local bush, the pandanus and the coco-palm (Stevenson 2009: 101). The only animals inhabiting atolls, apart from men, are the land crab, the rat and huge swarms of insects. Fish may abound in the lagoon, but it is also true that a lot of them are highly toxic for men or bear poisonous spines. Moreover, a certain fish in the lagoon may be poisonous but the same fish in the ocean may be edible. In the next atoll it may be the other

way around. Atolls lie on sophisticated eco-balances that even locals cannot entirely understand.

Stevenson does not want to make an apology of cannibalism but he simply tries to understand the origin of a phenomenon without cultural preconception. In this sense he applies the lesson of Montaigne, one of Stevenson's favourite readings and father of modern relativism. Like Montaigne, Stevenson makes an effort to see from the point of view of the 'other'. Taking a stance that would be called 'animalist relativism' today, he underlines how minimal the difference is between eating a human being and eating a living being of another species, especially in its infancy. A vegetarian or a Buddhist, he says, would be horrified at our consumption of meat. In Western culture (a point already made by Montaigne) we reject the idea of eating what is close to us: men or pets. But the distance from man and a certain animal varies from culture to culture. Many Pacific islanders, for example, live with their pigs as we do with our dogs. Like Montaigne, Stevenson adopts an approach to another culture which is not a rejection of his own culture. He cannot but be European and Scottish, as Montaigne was French. However, he accepts the possibility of other points of view, as legitimate as his. This makes him continuously question and reconsider his own positions. The final message seems to be that there is not only one way to be human. Our way is just one of the many possible ways (1).

Stevenson also wrote some fictional works in this period. In the two South Sea yarns *The Wrecker* (1891, written with his stepson Lloyd) and *The Ebb-Tide* (1894) he does not fall into easy *clichés*. Rather than following the usual idyll of the white sailor and the Polynesian nymph (see Loti or Melville) or the hackneyed adventures among the cannibals, he describes the traffic of white men in the South Pacific. In the prologue of *The Wrecker*, this region is defined as "a wide ocean, indeed, but a narrow world", where a stranger will soon become used to "a certain laxity of moral tone which prevails, as in memory of Mr Hayes, on smuggling, ship-scuttling, barratry, piracy, the labour trade, and

other kindred fields of human activity" (2) and find Polynesia "no less instructive than Pall Mall or Paris" (Stevenson 2011a: 15). Stevenson ironically underlines some of the Western evils that Europeans spread in the South Seas, together with physical diseases such as small-pox and tuberculosis, so much so that in the epilogue of *The Wrecker* the internal narrator Havens calls his story "a tale of a caste so modern; – full of details of our *barbaric* manners and unstable morals; – full of the need and the lust of money, so that there is scarce a page in which the dollars do not jingle; – full of the unrest and movement of our century, so that the reader is hurried from place to place and sea to sea, and the book is less a romance than a panorama" (Stevenson 2011a: 588). His reversal of perspective in attributing the term "barbaric" to the "civilised" colonisers instead of former cannibals is another example of relativism and a vocal criticism of the Western capitalist system. Stevenson offers a "panorama" of Polynesia as a world inhabited by Western adventurers (dealing in illegal traffic like opium-smuggling or the wreck-racket), unscrupulous "captains-usurers" (who rob the survivors of a shipwreck of all their goods in exchange for a passage) and "beachcombers", the name given to the scum of Western society (petty criminals and rich good-for-nothing exiled from their families) cast away onto Polynesian shores by the surf, like the protagonists of *The Ebb-Tide*. The grim atmosphere of these novels doesn't leave space to romance any longer. Stevenson's compromised heroes are worse than pirates, since the latter respected a code of honour (the famous "black spot" of *Treasure Island*) while now the only law regulating one's actions is that of mere profit. As Linda Dryden suggests, Stevenson creates the type of "degenerate self-seeking outcast subverting the myth of the imperial adventurer" (Dryden 2009: 3), anticipating Joseph Conrad's fiction. Stevenson's and Conrad's critical attitudes towards imperialism question the 'civilising' mission of white man. But, as pinpointed by Richard Ambrosini, "Conrad's subversion would have been impossible if Stevenson had not opened a space critical of adventure by making the

rejection of the glamour associated with this idea a constant theme in both his fiction and nonfiction" (Ambrosini 2009: 23).

In *Culture and Imperialism*, however, Said is critical of Conrad, too, accusing him of "eurocentrism", that is, of being unable to conceive of other narratives but the European one. If on the one hand Conrad is anti-imperialist because he denounces the corruption and inefficiency of the colonial enterprise, which is self-deluding and self-justifying, on the other he ends up affirming the imperial system by his rejection of any viable alternative. In refusing the possibility of indigenous resistance, Said says, Conrad acts as an imperialist.

Stevenson's last works not only anticipate the 'anti-imperialist' themes expounded by Conrad but also acknowledge the presence of the 'other' and of a different narrative. That Stevenson believed in the possibility of indigenous resistance is testified by his study on Samoan contemporary history *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa* (1892), in which he denounces the fight for supremacy of the three European powers in the archipelago (Germany, Britain and the USA) and sides with the Samoan rebels led by local chief Mataafa, opposing the puppet king chosen by the Germans, Tamasese. This essay caused great embarrassment in the Foreign Office and prompted an official document aimed at stopping further interferences of the writer, which would have otherwise cost him deportation (Jolly 1996: xliii). Moreover, in this work Stevenson applies a 'scientific' method of historical research by cross-examining different sources in order to record the voices of those who were not allowed to express their view or write their own history, unlike the Europeans who could easily avail themselves of reports, military despatches, letters and written documents (Jolly 2009: 78-79). First he interviews the indigenous protagonists of the upheavals: the rebels' leader Mataafa and the legitimate king Laupepa, deposed by the Germans and replaced with compliant Tamasese. Then Stevenson takes into accounts the cultural reasons for the Samoans' conduct, largely misinterpreted by the Germans. King Laupepa's deposition, for example,

was due to his (allegedly) inefficient policies in persecuting theft, a crime which was undermining the German plantations in the archipelago. Providing direct and indirect evidence (interviews and the analysis of the notions of 'king' and 'theft' in the local language), Stevenson argues that the role of the king equates him to a divinity in theory, but in fact allows him limited decisional power. Furthermore, he demonstrates that the practice of sharing goods was quite common in Samoan culture, not only within the same group but also between different clans. What was considered 'theft' and persecuted in European culture was legitimised by custom in another. So, the King's lack of intervention was not due to negligence but to etiquette and customary habit. As previously in *In the South Seas*, Stevenson's openness to another perspective is quite clear and absolutely rare for the time being.

A further example of Stevenson's innovative approach to colonial reality is his representation of the indigenous woman in "The Beach of Falesà" (1892), which offers one of the few love stories of his fiction: that between trader Wiltshire and island girl Uma. Unlike most South Sea idylls, the affair does not end up tragically either with the girl's death or her abandonment by the white man and does not imply her reconversion into a European. In her research of 19th century fiction on Maori written by Europeans or white New Zealanders, Lani Kavika Hunter draws up a balance of over 40 novels she consulted. Twelve of them belong to the genre of "Maori romance" – quite similar to the "South Sea idyll", since Maori are of Polynesian origin and were subjected to the same exotic/erotic imagery as Pacific islanders – and include depictions of "pure" and "half-caste" Maori female figures as principal characters. Eight of these figures are killed off, two are obliged to return to their tribes, while the remaining two marry their European lovers but are "exported", that is, removed from their sociocultural settings to be anglicised (like the Native American Pocahontas). On the contrary, in "The Beach of Falesà" Wiltshire, one of the many uncouth merchants in search of fortune in the Pacific, rejects the widespread custom of

the false marriage with an indigenous girl (with a fake wedding and a fake certificate, and lasting until the man's departure) and decides to be legally united in holy matrimony by a priest. The couple will have three children and live happily on the island. Wiltshire will also bring to an end the reign of terror imposed by another trader, Case, an unscrupulous Englishman who takes advantage of the natives thanks to his ingenious contraptions, which grant him a god-like status.

Wiltshire is not an idealised character. He is rough, uneducated and prejudiced against indigenous people. Through him, Stevenson portrays the typical assumption of superiority of the white merchant in the Pacific, as his speech to the chiefs of the village demonstrates when he wants to know why he has been tabooed:

> You tell them who I am. I'm a white man, and a British Subject, and no end of a big chief at home; and I've come here to do them good and bring them civilisation; and no sooner have I got my trade sorted out, than they go and taboo me and no one dare come near my place! Tell them I don't mean to fly in the face of anything legal; and if what they want's a present, I'll do what's fair. [...] [B]ut if they think they're going to come any of their native ideas over me, they'll find themselves mistaken. And tell them plain, that I demand the reason of this treatment as a White Man and a British Subject (Stevenson 2011b: 102-104).

Wiltshire is so uncouth that a critic denied he could be British and called him "the 'Yankee narrator'" (Menikoff 1984: 96). Nevertheless, he dismantles wicked Case's manipulations (which also caused him to be tabooed), falls in love with and marries Uma, and stays on the island renouncing his dream of opening up a pub in England. This ending is a real rarity at the time. So is the portrait of an indigenous woman not as a stereotype but as a real human being. Uma is depicted as having virtues and defects. She is so courageous as to face the

night spirits of the forest and rescue her husband, but she is also wily and not exempt from manipulative skills, as shown by her behaviour when she realises that Wiltshire loves her and soon uses her advantage position.

> "Farewell chief!"
>
> "Hold on," I cried. "Don't be in such a blamed hurry."
>
> She looked at me sidelong with a smile. "You see, you get copra," (3) says
>
> she, the same as you might offer candies to a child (Stevenson 2011b:
>
> 114).

Uma's presence in the story makes him a better man, so much so that he decides to throw all liqueur away because he does not want to become a brutish drunkard like most of the other whites on the island. Furthermore, by marrying an indigenous woman he shows he is not afraid of miscegenation, a 'crime' that was punished with imprisonment in some states of the USA until the late 1970s (Ambrosini 2011: 31). The novelty of "The Beach of Falesà" is considerable, despite the closing lines of the novella. While talking about the future of his children, a boy and two girls, he says he has sent the boy to Auckland, to receive a good education. But he has a problem with the girls: "They're only half castes of course; I know that as well as you do, and there's nobody thinks [*sic*] less of half castes than I do; but they're mine, and about all I've got; I can't reconcile my mind to their taking up with kanakas [Polynesians], and I'd like to know where I'm to find them whites?" (Stevenson 2011b: 228).

Though Case's tricks have proved how unreliable and corrupt white man can be, Wiltshire is still bound to steadfast prejudice. A racist statement from one of the best whites in the Pacific may be read either pessimistically or just ironically in tune with the rough fibre of the character, who is unable to re-elaborate his experience. Yet, his acts are better than his words. Stevenson's message seems to be: "This is the best you can get from a white trader in the South Seas".

Stevenson also wrote a few works featuring Polynesian main characters, among which the short stories "The Bottle Imp" and "The Isle of Voices". They were published in the volume *Island Nights Entertainments* (1893) together with "The Beach of Falesà", despite the author's fierce opposition. Their fairy-tale structure and supernatural elements make them quite different from the realistic tone of "The Beach of Falesà". For this reason he would have liked them to be included in another volume of *Märchen* (supernatural tales) and folk-stories, but had to accept Colvin's and the publisher's conditions. Stevenson identifies with Polynesian characters, all from the Hawaii, avoiding easy stereotypes and idyllic *clichés*. He depicts them not as people outside history but rooted in their time, that is, affected by the contact with the Europeans and therefore hybrid. The couple Keawe and Kokua in "The Bottle Imp" are literate and catechized. They fear the flames of hell and are willing to get rid as soon as possible of the magical bottle that can make their wishes come true but also leads its last possessor to eternal damnation. The plot alludes to a well-known fairy-tale belonging to Stevenson's childhood (the story of the genie in the bottle who can fulfil one's desires). In the introduction he explicitly says he wants to adapt it for a Polynesian public and the story will be the first Western tale translated into Samoan and published in the missionary magazine *O Le Sulu Samoa*. "The Bottle Imp", however, does not stress the obvious moral but rather seems to be a further satire of Western materialism, since the man who first sells the bottle to Keawe and the one who finally buys it (consciously accepting his eternal damnation) are both white. In "The Isle of Voices" Stevenson includes many references to episodes, traditions, issues and places that we find in his essay *In the South Seas*. For example, the atoll where sorcerer Kalamake transforms shells into coins recalls one of the Paumotu and there are references to cannibal practices, too. Kalamake, who is "more white to look upon than any foreigner" and whose hair is "the colour of dry grass" (Stevenson 1996: 103) is the ultimate symbol of hybridity, keeping the picture of Queen Victoria in his house next to

that of King Kamehameha the Fifth, displaying the Bible on a shelf but utilizing charms, amulets and special herbs to make his spells and, most of all, using ancestral magic to coin jingling dollars. He isn't the only initiate to this practice, because the Isle of Voices resonates with all tongues of the earth, spoken by other sorcerers: "the French, the Dutch, the Russian, the Tamil, the Chinese" (Stevenson 1996: 119). The Isle of Voices epitomises all the Pacific and its exploitation by traders from all over the world, who have come here to transform local resources into solid Western money.

Stevenson also includes references to Polynesian legends and traditions, such as the cult of the ancestors in "The Bottle Imp" and the allusion to the creation myth of the Pacific islands (and New Zealand) in "The Isle of Voices", according to which they were fished out of the ocean by demi-god Maui. The mix of present and past, of direct experience and myth makes these allegorical stories original and exempt from that projection of Western desires that is found in much South Sea literature. Most importantly, Stevenson never pretended them to be truly Polynesian legends or tried to enact an essentialist return to an ideal pre-contact past. Here, as in all his Pacific writings, he portraits the region as a hybrid place of encounters and contamination, of abuses and exchanges, showing the complexity of an impending global world rather than a simplified, uncontaminated and idealized Eden. His openness to listen to the reasons of the 'other', the seriousness of his scope, his acute observation and, finally, his political commitment in *A Footnote to History* show how far Stevenson had gone from romance and *Treasure Island*.

NOTES

1. See Sergio Benvenuto's appendix to Montaigne's essay *Dei Cannibali*, entitled "Lo spettro di Montaigne si aggira per l'Europa".

2. Bully Hayes (William Henry Hayes, 1827-1877) was an American captain who engaged in blackbirding in the 1860s and the 1870s and whose arrival on any

Pacific island would cause islanders to hide in fear of being kidnapped and shipped off to be a labourer on some distant plantation. He has often been described as a South Sea pirate and 'the last of the Buccaneers'.

3. Copra is the dried meat of the coconut and the main commercial interest of the South Seas in the late 19th century.

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Irony and the Absurd in Joseph Conrad's "An Outpost of Progress"

Abstract I: The aim of this paper is to explore the possibility of reading "An Outpost of Progress" (1897), the first fiction where Joseph Conrad deals with Europeans in Africa, through Samuel Beckett's categories of alienation and the absurd. The perspective opened up by such a comparison can illuminate, I argue, the irony underlying Conrad's writings, especially as regards his debated attitude towards the Empire, largely based on *Heart of Darkness*, after Chinua Achebe's and Edward Said's critical interventions on it.

Abstract II: In questo articolo vorrei proporre una lettura di "An Outpost of Progress" (1897), il primo testo letterario in cui Joseph Conrad si confronta con la presenza degli europei in Africa, attraverso le categorie beckettiane di alienazione e assurdo. Ritengo che una simile comparazione possa illuminare l'ironia che sottende la scrittura conradiana, soprattutto in rapporto alla posizione dell'autore rispetto all'impero, largamente fondata su *Heart of Darkness*, così come questa si è sedimentata a partire dagli interventi di Chinua Achebe e dello stesso Edward Said.

Introduction

As Joseph Conrad himself wrote: "'An Outpost of Progress' is the lightest part of the loot I carried off from Central Africa, the main portion being of course 'The Heart of Darkness'" (1). Conrad's stay in the Belgian Congo in 1890, due to last three years according to his initial commitment, ended abruptly after eight months and the author returned to Europe to be hospitalized for a long time for bad physical and psychological conditions. Much has been written about the

weight of this crucial African experience in Conrad's life and works. The author's debated position towards the Empire, which has been viewed as either pro-Empire, owing to his racially charged depictions of the African people, or anti-imperialistic – by virtue of his enlightened awareness of the rapacity of colonialism – is largely built, though, on *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Nonetheless, "An Outpost of Progress" (1897), written a couple of years before his renowned masterpiece, was by his own judgment his favourite story (2). In this short and puzzling work, where he dealt for the first time with Europeans in Africa, Conrad felt he had achieved that unity of tone he was pursuing in his early writing activity (3).

In his first, thorough study of Conrad titled *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, a revised version of his PhD dissertation at Harvard, Edward Said devoted many pages to *Heart of Darkness* leaving a limited critical space to the analysis of "An Outpost of Progress". To Said, Kayerts and Carlier, the two white agents in Africa who feature as protagonists of the story and who eventually die for their inability to cope with the place and the people "had surrendered themselves to a commercial enterprise confirming the victory of the idea of imperialism and conquest" (Said 1966: 143). I will return to this interpretation of the triumph of imperialism. When Said resumed his work on Conrad in 1993 in various section of *Culture and Imperialism*, almost twenty years had passed since Chinua Achebe's anathema against the Polish writer in his American lecture "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'", which had in the meantime become one of the most debated essays of postcolonial criticism, along with its object, *Heart of Darkness* itself. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said rightly 'defended' Conrad's most famous novella from Achebe's historically motivated attack by placing it in a cultural context according to which its politics, aesthetics and epistemology could only be imperialist (4). Conrad was a man of his time and so is Marlow; no matter how enlightened Marlow might at times sound in his account of his trip along the river

Congo, according to Said he (and Conrad) failed to see the signs of "a world *resisting* imperialism" (Said 1993: 34) and would not acknowledge the right to freedom to the 'natives' (5). But what about the Europeans in Africa? "An Outpost of Progress", which I believe is possibly even more telling than *Heart of Darkness* on the subject, does not feature in Said's analysis, as it does not come across anywhere in Achebe's reflection on Conrad.

It is fair to remark, though, that since the Nineties, with the notable exception of Jakob Lothe in 1989, several scholars have turned their interest to "An Outpost of Progress" and agreed on its profound relevance within a discourse which tries to position Conrad with respect to the European colonial enterprise underling his ambivalence and uneasiness towards it, rather than his supposed racism (Achebe) or historically 'unavoidable' ideological support (Said) (6). Even so, in one of these readings it is stated that Conrad depicted the Africans either as part of the wilderness – that is, incomprehensible to Western minds/eyes, as it happens in *Heart of Darkness*, – or as 'mimic men', corrupted by Western manners which they imitate with comic, undignified or disturbing results (7). In their works, Jakob Lothe, Keith Carabine and Nils Clausson have correctly underlined the role of irony in this story; Carabine and Clausson, in particular, have specified that it is irony which gives the text the unity of tone Conrad felt he had finally achieved, a type of irony that the author was due to exploit also in some of his longer fiction (8). Even more specifically, Clausson has turned his attention to the way Europeans are portrayed by Conrad and pinpointed that the irony perceived in his depiction of Kayerts and Carlier should be equally detected in his 'stereotyped' description of the Africans: why should we, in fact, think that when Conrad is writing about Europe and Europeans he is being 'ironical' while if he describes Africa and the Africans he is being a victim of the contemporary popular clichés? (9).

Starting from these critical appraisals and from the emphasis given by scholars to the role played by irony in "An Outpost of Progress", this article

explores the possibility of reading Conrad's story through a new set of lenses, that is through Samuel Beckett's categories of alienation and the absurd. The perspective opened up by such a comparison can show how irony in this text contributes to the creation of a modern atmosphere of absurdity, thus locating the writer in a not so conservative ideological scenario as the one normally associated with him. If we acknowledge the novelties of Conrad's first African fiction by letting it 'converse' with the works of Beckett, distant from Conrad for endless reasons, many of the traditional ways of framing the author into conformist positions do not hold anymore.

I have no evidence that Beckett ever read "An Outpost of Progress", but my point is not to hypothesize rewritings; it is rather to establish a dialogue between two classics through their texts and the meanings these keep on producing if questioned from new perspectives. I want to see if Beckett can be of any help in reading Conrad. Can our familiarity with Beckett's world and its 'discontents' make us read Conrad differently? Could we consider the idea that one of the paths opened by Conrad led to Beckett's tragic but also poignant 'nihilism'? Can this thought produce new interpretations of "An Outpost of Progress" and of its postcolonial relevance within Conrad's canon? I believe the two authors partake of a similar tragi-comical, 'pathetic' idea of life leading both of them to an analogous form of humanism in their depiction of the individual. They both underline, in obviously different manners, the lack of sense and effectiveness in the mechanism of life *per se*, a mechanism whose victims are both human beings, often reduced to puppets, and language, deprived of its immediate meaning and logic. Truth itself comes out as a farce, a performance no one can be sure about, including those who put it on stage. There is a slow process of deprivation which Conrad activates in his literary writings, stripping them of actions and rationality. *Mutatis mutandis*, subtraction is Beckett's distinctive cipher. I am convinced that both Conrad and Beckett are concerned about how to reproduce their tragic sense of life in art through

language and subtractions, and that irony played for both a key role, providing a way to achieve this goal. As Beckett himself put it in his *German letter of 1937*: "on the way to this literature of the unword, which is so desirable to me, some form of Nominalist irony might be a necessary stage" (Beckett 1984: 172-173).

A Not-so-awkward Comparison

The names of Joseph Conrad and Samuel Beckett are rarely found associated in criticism and only in the context of discussions about writing in a language different from one's mother-tongue. The distance from their countries of origin and their settlement in different cultures, where they were in some ways 'exiles', together with the problematic choice of using, respectively, a third and a second language – in both cases learned as adults - for their creative writing, played a fundamental role in the shaping of their lives and literary works. However, there are also other kinds of fruitful comparisons between the two which may provide new ways to look at Conrad and which can, in particular, cast an interesting light on the way he portrayed the European colonial enterprise in Africa. I am thinking in particular of the possibility of comparing their use of ironical discourse, which is never too explicit but rather a sort of 'detached' irony. This is particularly relevant in "An Outpost of Progress" where, unlike the case of *Heart of Darkness*, the distance between the authorial narrator and the two protagonist of the story, together with the lack of sympathy on behalf of the narrative voice towards Kayerts and Carlier, increase the idea of estrangement surrounding the two Belgians (10). If it is true that Conrad does not completely identify with Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, it is also true that there is an authorial closeness between the two, whereas "An Outpost of Progress" displays a problematic triangle among author, narrative voice and the two main characters.

While imbued with Victorian values, Conrad in fact continually undermines them through the inconclusive structure of his prose, especially his

peculiar use of narrative voices and the deconstruction of traditional plots, thus opening the way to Modernism. In many regards, "An Outpost of Progress" presents several aspects which foreshadow Beckett's aesthetics: the use of symmetry and opposition, the focus on failure rather than on heroism, the depiction of immobility, the puppet-like features of the two main characters and their childishness, the lack of meaning in their behaviour, their idleness, pettiness and vacuity, the tragi-comical absurdity of the situations portrayed, the notion of displacement informing the story and, last but not least, the pervasive scepticism with which the tale is told, that is, the destabilization of language and of the rhetoric it carries. The same elements also play an important role in *Heart of Darkness*, where – on the other hand – Marlow's consciousness and his efforts to make sense out his trip to Africa, together with the aura surrounding Kurtz and his station before, during and after Marlow's encounter with him, push all the rest to the background. As Said puts it:

> Thus Marlow's encounter with the improbably white-suited clerk in the middle of the jungle furnishes him with several digressive paragraphs, as does his meeting later with the semi-crazed, harlequin-like Russian who has been so affected by Kurtz's gifts. Yet underling Marlow's inconclusiveness, his evasions, his arabesque meditations on his feelings and ideas, is the unrelenting course of the journey itself, which, despite all the many obstacles, is sustained through the jungle, through time, through hardship, to the heart of it all, Kurtz's ivory-trading empire. Conrad wants us to see how Kurtz's great looting adventure, Marlow's journey up the river, and the narrative itself all share a common theme: Europeans performing act of imperial mastery and will in (about) Africa (Said 1993: 25).

At the beginning of "An Outpost of Progress", a cynical Managing Director leaves Kayerts and Carlier in charge of an irrelevant commercial station along the river Congo with the promise that he will be back six months later. Being too

busy elsewhere to bother, he will end up leaving them there for much longer. Kayerts and Carlier are out in Africa, as many Western people were in that period, with the prospect of making easy money trading ivory, but they also flatter themselves, as many ended up doing, with the rhetoric of the civilizing mission, of which they like to portray themselves as agents; a rhetoric still in vogue at the end of the century and bolstered up in the newspapers of the time:

> They also found some old copies of a home paper. That print discussed what it was pleased to call 'Our Colonial Expansion' in high-flown language. It spoke much of the rights and duties of civilisation, of the sacredness of the civilising work, and extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith, and commerce to the dark places of the earth. Carlier and Kayerts read, wondered, and began to think better of themselves. Carlier said one evening, waving his hand about, 'In a hundred years, there will be perhaps a town here, Quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and – and – billiard-rooms. Civilisation, my boy, and virtue – and all. And then, chaps will read that two good fellows, Kayerts and Carlier, were the first civilised men to live in this very spot!' Kayerts nodded, 'Yes, it is a consolation to think of that' (Conrad 1997: 8).

If we take into account that "An Outpost of Progress" was published the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Conrad's accent on David Livingstone's three 'C' - Civilisation, Christianity, Commerce – in the above mentioned passage ("light, and faith and commerce") and the fact that the supposed "civilising work" is here to be achieved by two such dull and incompetent characters as Kayerts and Carlier encourage a political interpretation of Conrad's irony and scepticism. The story shows that there is no continuity between the pompous rhetoric of Empire and its factual, squalid reality. On the contrary, language and its contents are in strident contrast with each other and their combination produces, as in Beckett, comic results. The two protagonists

are obviously no heroes: "Look at those two imbeciles" (Conrad 1997: 4) says of them the Managing Director at the very beginning of the text. They are two insignificant, narrow-minded and uninteresting characters, whose background, quickly sketched by the unmerciful anonymous narrator, reveals less than ordinary lives 'at home'. In Kayerts and Carlier, as well as in their colonial enterprise, we find no trace of Marlow's complexity and depth. The fantasy of the birth of a 'civilized' town in the middle of Africa envisaged by Carlier in a moment of self-celebration provoked by the magniloquent language of the papers they found, as the passage quoted shows, is contradicted and ridiculed by the total lack of practical skills of the two men. What comes through is that they will never be able to build anything at all, nor will they create the preconditions for such an enterprise. Their incompetence speaks of both individual deficiencies and the irresponsible historical behaviour of European powers, which were evidently not in charge of what was going on in Africa, supposing that such a job as the ivory 'trade' in Congo, and all that went with it, could have been properly managed and justified.

On the other hand, and as a proof of that, Kayerts and Carlier seem to be no exception to the rule, as their predecessor at the station was yet another loser; he is described as "an unsuccessful painter who, weary of pursuing fame on an empty stomach, had gone out there through high protections" (Conrad 1997: 3). We are told he died in unclear circumstances; possibly of a fever, as Makola (a Sierra Leone man in charge of the relationship with the locals at the station) reports as the only witness; or maybe for the same reason Carlier himself at last succumbs, as the reader is led to believe when Makola lies about Kayerts' accidental killing of his mate and eventually claims the man died of fever. Language is hardly presented in this story as a reliable medium for truth, and truth itself, here as in all of Conrad's writings, is a notoriously slippery concept. "An Outpost of Progress" suggests, without appeal, that whatever the Europeans were doing in Africa, they were not sending there their best

specimens. Physically frail, psychologically weak, these two (three, if we also include the first agent) come out across the text as 'children' to be taken care of. Conrad portrays them as "two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals, whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds", walking "arm in arm drawing close to one another as children do in the dark", thus subverting the contemporary oratory of Empire and the thoughts of its self-proclaimed agents (11). "'I can hardly believe it,' says Kayerts tearfully. 'We took care of them as if they had been our children'" (Conrad 1997: 14) is the first thought which comes across Kayerts' mind once the ten station (black) men have disappeared; not to mention a whole literature of the time, of which Rudyard Kipling is but the most famous example, producing the same patronizing image of non-Western people as children. The peculiar features of Kayerts and Carlier, which can equally be found in many secondary characters of *Heart of Darkness* mainly to add to Marlow and the reader's bewilderment, contribute here to the creation of a "theatrical farce" (Paccaud-Huguet 1996: 93): a tragicomedy in two parts, as it were, a sort of ur-text for *Waiting for Godot*. In both Conrad and Beckett we find the ordinariness of life – everyday actions, conversations, human needs – portrayed as farcical in order to convey a wider sense of the tragic fate of life, that is its irrational and unmanageable route leading inevitably to failure and death.

The 'Non-sense' of Waiting

It is not surprising to find Kayerts and Carlier often compared by critics to Bouvard and Pécuchet, most recently by Laurence Davies in his essay on Conrad's ironic shadowing (12). The inability to perform any sort of practical work – they can't fish, can't hunt, can't farm – which they share with the two characters created by Gustave Flaubert, also foreshadows Beckett's favourite character, the ineffectual Belacqua, who migrates to the Irish playwright's prose straight from Dante's *Purgatorio*, where he is depicted outside the door of the

afterworld's middle reign, hugging his knees and waiting for the passing of time in order to access the place where he can start his proper expiation: another wait due to last the same number of years as his indolent life. Waiting is indeed the only activity Kayerts and Carlier are engaged in: "The two men understood nothing, cared for nothing but for the passage of days that separated them from the steamer's return" (Conrad 1997: 8).

In the criticism related to "An Outpost of Progress" I found only one passing reference to Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, whose names feature in a list including the above mentioned Bouvard and Pécuchet, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (13). Conrad portrays Kayerts and Carlier chatting "persistently in familiar tones" (Conrad 1997: 5) to distract themselves from the fear instilled by an unknown and unappealing (to them, but not to the natives nor to the narrator) landscape and by people they fail to understand while waiting for the steamer to come back. They soon develop nostalgia for their trifling routine at home. Also Vladimir and Estragon, whose past we more or less ignore, find themselves in yet another alienated and inexplicable environment such as an almost empty stage - but for a single bare tree in the first act, with five leaves in the second - where they have to entertain themselves waiting for someone who does not turn up. 'While waiting', they perform trivial actions and talk nonsense. Their relationship with the place is not particularly emphasised by Beckett but for one allusion: "We're not from these parts" (Beckett 1970: 16) says Estragon to Pozzo in the first act. According to Beckett's indications when the play was first performed in the US, the two were originally meant to speak with an Irish accent underlining a displacement familiar to Beckett and which the two do not share with the master and slave couple of Lucky and Pozzo, the master claiming to be the actual owner of the land where the play takes place. Beckett's characters develop absurd strategies and purposeless dialogues to pass the time which separates the present from their expectations, the arrival of Godot. There is no future for them,

and time flows, as in most of Beckett's works, as the sun shines "having no alternative, on the nothing new" (Beckett 1957: 1); that is, in a series of repetitions depriving both language of its primary functions and actions of progress, meanings and targets. Beckett's depiction of immobility in *Waiting for Godot* has become iconic: "Shall we go? / Let's go. *They don't move*" (Beckett 1970: 61) being possibly among the most quoted theatre lines ever. But also Conrad's subtle denial of that progress he ironically recalls in the title of his story activates, I think, a capsizing which works as a palimpsest for modernity. If action takes place at all, as some critics have underlined, it leads, rather, to a regression (14).

There is a theatrical aspect in Conrad's story which has not been underlined enough so far and which frames the European colonial enterprise of "An Outpost of Progress" within the significant structure of a farce. Whereas the setting of *Heart of Darkness* is dynamic, presenting a progression along the river and backwards, let alone Marlow's trips back and forth from Europe to Africa, and, within Europe, from London to an anonymized European city that suggests Brussels and back, the location of "An Outpost of Progress" is static and looks like a theatre stage. But for some circumscribed references to Kayerts and Carlier's previous life in Belgium, the station is the only location we see. Together with the two agents and three different groups of natives coming and going in and out of the scene, we are never allowed to leave the setting of the trading station, which thus becomes a symbolic site.

Couples

Vladimir and Estragon form a very close duo although they are different from each other and we are given no hints of their common past. Their physical and psychological differences are the cause of endless minor fights and seem to suggest, more than once, a possible parting. Although they keep on asking themselves "if it wouldn't be better for us to part" (Beckett 1970: 12); or saying that they would "have probably been better off alone, each one for himself"

(Beckett 1970: 36) and eventually suggest "If we parted? That might be better for us" (Beckett 1970: 61), they do not separate, because "It's not worth while now" (Beckett 1970: 36), whatever that 'now' means in such a timeless environment. Among their ineffective entertainments they also consider committing suicide by hanging, an option deprived of its tragic implications and discarded because it would leave one of the two alive and alone. "Gogo light – bough not break – Gogo dead. Didi heavy – bough break – Didi alone" (Beckett 1970: 13) says Estragon in the first act in an exchange which once again stresses their mutual tie and the impossibility/fear of any form of separation. In the second act, towards the end of the play, the suicide plot is mentioned and discarded once more: the cord they would use, originally holding up Estragon's trousers, breaks. They decide that they will hang themselves 'tomorrow' with a proper rope: no possibility of taking the plan seriously for the audience at this stage, not only because 'tomorrow' is likely to be the same as 'today', but also because Estragon's trousers are down and he is left on the stage in his underwear. A figure of fun and ridicule, he looks more like a character in a gross variety show than a tragic hero, as the situation should suggest. The nameless protagonist of Beckett's *Act without Words* (1956) also tries to hang himself, but the only branch of the palm tree he plans to use folds down against the trunk. Belacqua as well is notoriously familiar with failed attempts at suicide, not to mention Bouvard and Pécuchet's misplaced determination to kill themselves.

Kayerts and Carlier, whose first names we ignore – as we ignore Vladimir and Estragon's last names - but whose alliteration and rhyming hint at a unity of sorts, are also very different, both physically and psychologically. The former short and fat, the latter tall and slim, the contrasts between the two often lead to comical outcomes. Kayerts is more emotional, ready to be moved to tears by the Managing Director's "kindness" in giving such "an exceptional opportunity for them" (Conrad 1997: 4) in that 'promising' outpost of progress and trade. On the contrary, Carlier is cynical, less idealistic and more pragmatically interested

in the profits to be made through the ivory trade, exploiting the 'savages' employed for the task. Left at the station by the Managing Director, possibly alone for the first time ever in their lives, they soon develop an unlikely affection one for the other. By the end of the first day/page each would refer to the other as "my dear fellow" (Conrad 1997: 7) and they would consider themselves as brothers, out of the not-so-remote fear that one of the two could die, leaving the other one alone, as the narrator informs us, ruthlessly revealing their petty and secret thoughts. As in *Waiting for Godot*, the couple should stay, no matter what, and loneliness is a condition to avoid at all cost.

Death, evoked in *Waiting for Godot* by the comical attempts at suicide performed, and by Vladimir's laconic comment about life: "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps" (Beckett 1970: 58) is a creeping presence in "An Outpost of Progress" from the very beginning of the tale, and although it turns into brutal facts, Conrad does not spare it an ironical treatment, especially in the case of Kayerts's final and successful suicide. Near Kayerts and Carlier's house lies the grave of the first agent marked by a lopsided cross. The presence of the grave acquires an emblematic relevance by being introduced in the same sentence where we are also informed of Kayerts' appointment as first agent. There is a creepy symbolic continuity in this sentence prefiguring the whole evolution (or involution) of the plot: "The director had the cross put up over the first agent's grave, and appointed Kayerts to the post" (Conrad 1997: 4). Carlier will later on fix the cross properly, this being the only practical task he succeeds in achieving:

> […] early one day, Carlier went out and replanted the cross firmly. 'It used
> to make me squint whenever I walked that way.' He explained to Kayerts
> over the morning coffee. 'It made me squint, leaning over so much. So I
> just planted it upright. And solid, I promise you! I suspended myself with
> both hands to the cross-piece. Not a move. Oh I did that properly'
> (Conrad 1997: 8-9).

At the end of the story a dazed Kayerts will look at the cross and see "a dark smudge, a cross-shaped stain, upon the shifting purity of the mist" (Conrad 1997: 22), just before hanging himself from it. Thanks to the good carpentry work of his mate, his resolution is successfully achieved. Death and tragedy are not the outcome of the unfamiliar environment the two feared so much, nor are they the product of a conflict between Kayerts and Carlier and the natives (with whom they fail to establish any kind of connection), as the reader is led to foresee at the beginning of the story. Death and tragedy come from inside, they are Kayerts and Carlier's own produce, the outcome of their practical and human incompetence, and of their fatal interaction one with the other. Empire and its agents are here portrayed in the route leading to their implosion by virtue of their own inner structural and ethical inappropriateness.

The Unbearable Truth

The tie between Kayerts and Carlier is seriously undermined when the two find out that Makola, the "Sierra Leone nigger" (Conrad 1997: 3), who significantly turns out to be the only one really in charge at the station, has exchanged ten black men belonging to the Company for six trunks of ivory from some Angolan traders. Where the two European lower-middle class men have failed, the polyglot, multitask, double named African Makola-Henry Price succeeds. Makola's unambiguous exchange proclaims the divorce between a fake philanthropic idea of progress and civilization and the harsh reality of colonial trade, based on slavery. The actual sense of the European presence in Africa becomes so manifest that the faint balance which has sustained Kayerts and Carlier together so far is lost forever. "Slavery is an awful thing" (Conrad 1997: 15), had said Kayerts in an embarrassed exchange with his mate after Makola's private initiative; "you stingy old slave-dealer" says Carlier to Kayerts in a verbal fight over some sugar which will lead them to tragedy.

Abandoned by the other group of natives in charge of provisions, the two quickly run out of food and wait more and more anxiously for the Managing

Director to come and rescue them. Time goes by, the silence is heavy, tension mounts: "The steamer was late. At first they spoke of delay jauntily, then anxiously, then gloomily" (Conrad 1997: 17). Two more months pass. "Every evening they said, 'Tomorrow we shall see the steamer'" (Conrad 1997: 18). The steamer is busy somewhere else, its Managing Director thinking "that the useless station, and the useless men, could wait" (Conrad 1997: 18). The absence of any sign of the steamer and of a future to come reminds us again of the timeless and static setting of *Waiting for Godot*, where the future never comes because it has already happened and everything, every moment and action, just repeats itself. In Conrad's story, though, repetition is threatened by anxiety. Exasperated by fear, loneliness and hunger, the two have a major fight over a silly matter such as some sugar that Kayerts wants to keep for emergency while Carlier would like to use, considering their current situation an emergency. Following a farcical chase around the house, comical for both characters' physical unfitness for this kind of activity, Kayerts, who is armed and fears Carlier could be armed too and wanting to kill him, accidentally shoots Carlier. Comedy turns into tragedy. Once he finds out, through Makola, that his mate had no gun, he sits and – once again - waits. But the steamer is not Godot; it arrives, albeit late, piercing the air with its acute shriek in which Kayerts can hear progress calling for him: "Progress and civilization and all the virtues. Society was calling to its accomplished child to come, to be taken care of, to be instructed, to be judged, to be condemned; it called him to return to that rubbish heap from which he had wandered away, so that justice could be done" (Conrad 1997: 22). Once again Kayerts is portrayed as an infant. It is his turn, now, to perform his own sole successful action in the story and he hangs himself from the cross his mate so dutifully fixed. The Director finds him in a grotesque posture: "His toes were only a couple of inches above the ground; his arms hung stiffly down; he seemed to be standing rigidly at attention, but with one purple cheek playfully posed on the shoulder. And, irreverently, he was putting out a swollen

tongue at his Managing Director" (Conrad 1997: 23). The swollen tongue, sticking out of Kayerts's livid mask, can be read as a grimacing comment on the role of speech in this story and, more generally, on the rhetoric and paternalism of colonialism Carlier and Kayerts eventually succumb to (15). I do not subscribe to Said's idea that this work portrays the "victory of the idea of imperialism and conquest". On the contrary, I would say that it depicts imperialism as a tragic destroying force and, at its best, as a farce, as in the ambiguous character of Makola-Henry Price. When Makola says that Carlier died of fever, just as we were told that his predecessor did, Kayerts remains silent: lies, death and failure await the West in charge of the Congo station. In Kayerts' suicide and in his final grimace we find the objective correlative of a possible political stance, but also a poignant prefiguration of Beckett's ironical fight against the tricks of the tongue and the mystifications of language, put forward by characters whose discourse points to the stripping of meaning, the assault against words, the "destruction of language in the name of beauty", as Beckett himself wrote in his already quoted letter to Axel Kaun.

Although it is not possible, and beyond the scope of this article, to establish a direct link between Conrad and Beckett, I have tried to highlight some of the many paths that Conrad's fiction opened up and I would like to conclude with another suggestion which links Conrad and Beckett's 'pessimism'. A special brand of pessimism tinged with pathos for humankind, a mixture which makes us despise and pity Kayerts at the same time. The rubbish heap evoked at the end of Conrad's story brings me back to Beckett once more. Kayerts acknowledges he belongs to a rubbish heap, but could no longer go back to it; he would rather crucify himself in the Empire's 'outpost of progress'. In 1968 Beckett composed a provocative play lasting only 25 seconds, featuring no characters and no words, called *Breath*. Progressive subtractions throughout the years have only left rubbish on the stage: "no vertical, all scattered and lying" according to the playwright's indications; the intensity of lights slowly increasing

and decreasing synchronized to the sound of a breath, a leftover of humanity, finally united to the rubbish heap.

NOTES

1. Conrad 2006, w. p.
2. I am here referring to the first publishing dates of the two works which appeared, respectively, in: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 165 (February 1899): 164-460; vol. 166 (March 1899): 460-621 and vol. 167 (April 189): 620-781 and *Cosmopolis*, vol. 6 (June 1987): 609-20 and vol. 7 (July 1987): 1-15.
3. See Hilson & Timms 1990: 112; and Hamner 2001: 173.
4. See Said 1993: 26.
5. See Said 1993: 34.
6. Among these: Jeremy Hawthorn (1990); J. C. Hilson, D. Timms (1990); James M. Johnson (1996); Josiane Paccaud-Huguet (1996); Ted Billy (1997); Robert Hamner (2001); Nils Clausson (2009); Joseph A. Kestner (2010); Todd Kuchta (2010); M'hamed Bensemmane (2011). In Italy, Maria Antonietta Saracino (1996)'s afterword to her translation of the text (alongside with *Heart of Darkness*, *The Congo Diary* and *Up-river Book*) is the groundbreaking appraisal of the text.
7. See Johnson, 1996: 65-67.
8. See Lothe 1989: 53-54, Carabine 1997: ix and Clausson 2009: 73.
9. See Clausson 2009: 72.
10. See Lothe 1989: 45-56.
11. See Clausson 2009: 81.
12. See Davis 2005, but also Paccaud-Huguet 1996 & Billy 1997.
13. See Billy 1997: 65.
14. See Kestner 2010: 102-104.
15. See Paccaud-Huguet 1996: 97.

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