POSTCOLONIAL INTERVENTIONS

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EDITORS' NOTE

As I write this editorial I am starkly aware of the mutated connotations which the word 'precarity', on which this issue of *Postcolonial Intervention* focuses, has acquired in the context of the growing COVID-19 pandemic which has already killed so many thousands of people across the world. The global and pervasive impact of this disease has meant that irrespective of class, caste, gender, race or even the divides of Global North and Global South, human life itself has suddenly become unpredictably precarious. What makes things even more complicated is the fact that the impact of the pandemic is not confined to the realm of medical science and attendant institutional management alone. Various countries have had to impose strict lockdowns in order to combat the growth of the virus, resulting in major downturn in economic activities which has obviously adversely affected the lives of millions of people, especially those belonging to the precariat who have suddenly lost their livelihoods and have had to contend with the cruel dilemma of choosing between death by hunger or death by coronavirus. India itself has been the scene of many such episodes of an unmitigated tragedy where migrant labourers have either been sprayed with pesticides as if they were animals, or have been run over while walking miles and miles to return to their villages or have simply died en route due to either starvation or exhaustion. On one particularly gruesome occasion, some labourers

who had fallen asleep on a railway track, were run over by a freight train at night. And all this has been going on in a country which has also sent several special flights to countries around the world to safely bring back NRIs and their pets. Clearly even a pandemic does not erase our differences but often serves to reinforce entrenched hierarchies of one kind or another. This is also why African-Americans and Latinos in the United States have a disproportionately higher fatality rate, testifying to not just entrenched racism but also unequal access to healthcare and financial resources necessary for securing proper treatment conditioned by racial hierarchies.

Of course, when it comes to the issue of race in the United States one must recall the assassination of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others like them who have fallen victim to a hostile shroud of racist hatred which stems from the United States' own history of slavery, segregation and the failure to address the structures of systemic inequality and violence which such a history has fostered. Significantly, the countless episodes of protest and dissent generated by recent happenings, have also witnessed a remarkable surge in anti-racist, progressive, pluralist activism across the United States and Europe which have related recent violence with the history of colonial atrocities and have tried to recognise the reality of the past. It is perhaps in such activism that one can find those saplings of postcolonial/de-colonial hope which might re-shape the world once it begins to limp to normalcy after eventually overcoming the pandemic.

The papers in this issue reflect both an acknowledgment of the multidimensional precarity in which many are entangled as well as the possibility of a world beyond such miseries. The issue begins with a featured article by Professor Cecile Sandten, revolving around an analysis of Chris Cleave's novel *Little Bee* which interweaves issues of migration, institutional deprivations, language and violence. In the light of the revelations associated with the Windrush Scandal, such analysis gains even greater relevance and performs that cautionary role which postcolonial criticism often adopts. Sandten's exploration of the precariat consciousness is continued in the next paper by Ariktam Chatterjee and Arzoo Saha which locates precarity within circuits of neo-liberal capitalism and tries to analyse how such precarity finds reflection through various forms of Indian rap music. This is followed by Gorica Majstorovic's exploration of the migrant as precariat, particularly in the context of Africans trying desperately to cross into Europe through various illegal routes that are marked by myriad physical and institutional dangers, even as they seek refuge from diverse conflicts which are often generated by the currents of global economic forces. The final paper of this focal section on 'precarity' is Paul Veyret's analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and Mohammad Hanif's *Red Birds* which *e*xplore precarity by combining Judith Butler's notion of 'grievability' with Thomas Nail's idea of 'kinopolitics'.

Mohsin Hamid, in fact, operates as a link between the two sections of this issue as the first paper of the General Section, by Samar H. Aljahdali, focuses on *Exit West*

and Raja Shehadeh's *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle*, to explore issues of belonging and bordering, but from a different perspective. Similar underlying concerns are again explored from a much more intricately intertextual perspective by Catherine Brown-Robison as she reads comparatively Joyce and Walcott's re-writings of the Homeric texts, with special focus on homecoming. The next paper again shifts back to Africa as Lava Asaad foregrounds the paradigm of Islamic Environmentalism to offer a reading of Ibrahim Al-Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone*. A very different aspect of African culture appears in the next paper where Peter Omoko analyses the aesthetic considerations behind the Ọjọjọ festival of the Igbudu people as part of a critical challenge against Eurocentric disaparaging of orature and attendant degradation of pre-colonial cultural norms. The next paper again takes us across the Atlantic and documents the dangerous consequences of growing Evangelic influence in Brazil and its nexus with neo-colonial networks of power. The issue concludes with a review of Matthew Shum's monograph on Scottish author Thomas Pringle.

All these papers collectively embody postcolonialism's commitment to an emancipatory and pluralistic worldview where dissent must thwart exploitation, memory must combat erasure, diversity must negate compulsory homogeneity and solidarity and hope must overcome precarity. We know how impossible this sounds. Yet, what can scholars do but read, write, teach and hope? Through this journal and the thoughts it awakens, let us continue to do all that, together.

Precarious Discourse, Discursive Precarity: Chris Cleave's (Postcolonial) Refugee Novel Little Bee (The Other Hand) (2008)

Cecile Sandten

Introduction

Flight narratives and asylum accounts give voice to refugees to allow them to convey their extreme experiences of persecution, precarity, and poverty during their often life-threatening journeys to host countries, where they also often face unwelcoming hostility. Alongside the need to provide refugees and asylees with physical and psychological support, flight and asylum accounts,

in addition to their focus on the hardships and terrors, often posit the critical importance of language. On the one hand, the vital resources of knowledge and power that come with language are crucial for survival in the foreign, precarious, and dangerous environments that refugees inevitably face and often illegally inhabit. On the other hand, language also plays a central role for refugees in providing their accounts in order to be granted official refugee status. Yet, language also controls the representation of refugees in the dominant social and media discourse in the host country, since their reception and treatment (and, accordingly, social inclusion or exclusion) are strongly affected by existing prejudices and stereotypes.

Chris Cleave's 2008 novel *Little Bee* (a.k.a. T*he Other Hand*, henceforth: *Little Bee*) recounts the story of 16-year-old Little Bee, a refugee from the violent oil conflicts in Nigeria, who is illegally released from a British detention centre and turns to Sarah O'Rourke, a white middle-class British woman who works as a magazine editor. Sarah is Bee's only English acquaintance: previously, during an incident on a Nigerian beach, Sarah allowed attackers to cut off one of her fingers in exchange for them sparing the young Nigerian girl's life. Later, following an incident in which Sarah's four-year-old son was nearly lost, Bee, in the act of rescuing him, is caught by the police and deported, despite the futile efforts of her two English friends (Sarah and her lover) to save her.

The novel foregrounds Little Bee's transformation following the traumatizing events in her home country and her arrival in the UK, where she is faced with the necessity of either assuming an artificial identity of exemplary Britishness, or, alternatively, selling her body. In spite of official recognition of Nigerian English as a "legitimate national variety" of English (Kperogi 2015, 4), Bee is obliged to learn the Queen's English, which she does during her two-year confinement in the detention centre. In order to be granted the right to engage in dialogue with representatives of the host country, she is also schooled in appropriate conduct. The novel thus emphasises the consequences of the postcolonial encounter as well as the on-going colonial linguistic imperialism, which exposes its postcolonial 'others' to the efficiencies of the harsh British immigration system. Especially since the invocation of former Home Secretary Theresa May's "hostile environment" policy in 2012, this system has even enforced conditions for refugees and asylees that result in what can be said to constitute postcolonial precarity.

In what follows, I will draw on postcolonial discourse theories in order to address the function of language in the perception and treatment of refugees in the UK, arguing that language not only operates as a means of 'othering', but also plays a decisive role in the worsening of the precarious position of those already at the bottom of the social and political ladder. The main focus of my analysis will be on refugee identity and the response

of refugees to the various demands of acculturation in a system that has already placed them socially, culturally, and linguistically on the fringes. The speech acts of the persecution victims in the novel will be approached through an inquiry into the semantic layering of their (social) voices and, ultimately, into their position of symbolic hybridity. Accordingly, my paper will also look at the formulation and stylisation of Little Bee's narrative as well as the function of the literary devices employed, especially Cleave's use of irony, as these particularly emphasise the two-way nature of the dialogue, which draws attention to the postcolonial precarity epitomised in the binary construction of tourist/host and refugee/homeless, clearly portraying the different positions as conceptualised in the "us" and "them" paradigm. Even though the tourists in this case (Sarah and her husband Andrew) become involved in the precarious situation of the 'other', their position towards Little Bee, at the moment of crisis, is brought into moral question. To that extent, I argue that although refugees are faced with the necessity of learning the host country's language, which Bee does, they can nevertheless, through imitation, achieve a subversive refraction of its negative discourse. As Bhabha has stated, this can be defined as a form of hybridity that is viewed as producing the symbolic displacement of colonial power and domination, thereby achieving a form of subversion through evoked ambivalence (Bhabha 1994, 111-112). This ambivalence, which is derived from the interplay of mimicry and mockery, sets out to unsettle the unitary ideals of the colonial authority (Bhabha

1994, 85). Yet, unfortunately, Bee's mimicry does not help her to move beyond her precarious postcolonial condition, as she is stuck in what I will term a 'limbo' situation, exemplified at the end of the novel as she is once again persecuted by Nigerian soldiers. Her fate may become the same as that of her sister, who unlike Bee, was not able to flee to England but gang raped, tortured, and eventually killed.

The Nigerian Oil Wars, Rape, and Asylum-Seeking in the UK

Ever since the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta in 1956, the inhabitants of this region, in particular, have faced a surge of European explorers, and, following independence in 1960, of their own state authorities (Ukeje 2011, 84). As a result of oil export revenue, the Nigerian Delta is the most militarised region in the country (Ukeje 2011, 83). However, in addition to inter-communal violence, governmental security forces also commit crimes against the people of this region, including rape, sexual torture, and homicide. Lenning and Brightman's 2008 study on state crimes in Nigeria reported a widespread abuse of women by military officials for the purpose of instilling fear in Nigerian citizens and asserting "the state power over rebel forces and their communities" (Lenning and Brightman 2009, 41; also 35-36). A 2006 Amnesty International report presented numerous cases of rape as well as individual

testimonies confirming the state terror being carried out on Nigerian citizens. Women's rape claims against police officers, however, are either left uninvestigated, or, if insufficient evidence is provided under the prevailing law (e.g. under Sharia law, four male witnesses for a court case), may result in punishment of the victim for having had an extramarital affair (Amnesty International 2006, 25-27). Flight is also an unfavourable option, given that gender persecution (e.g. the threat of rape) is not considered a valid reason for seeking asylum in many host countries, among them, the UK.

The Human Rights Watch report "Detention and Denial of Women Asylum Seekers in the UK" states that more than half of all women who seek asylum in the UK are victims of sexual violence (2010). In addition, the report highlights the fact that the victim's ability to testify to sexual violence before the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) officers and legal representatives is often hindered not only by the language barrier (and mistrust), but also due to cultural differences that exacerbate the asylum seeker's difficulty, or even inability, to give an account of their traumatic experiences.

This state of uncertainty, in which refugees and asylees in the UK dwell, is represented in Chris Cleave's novel Little Bee, and is particularly detailed in the portrayal of the protagonist's experiences in the Black Hill Immigration Removal Centre. During the time Cleave was writ-

ing the novel, Nigeria ranked among the top ten nationalities of asylum applicants in the UK. Between 2006 and 2007, it was among the top eight nationalities for asylum removal and, in 2007, had the highest number of asylum detainees (Home Office Asylum Statistics 2006 and 2007). The case of the fictional character Little Bee is therefore exemplary of many contemporary cases of refugees facing an institutional and bureaucratic struggle to seek asylum.

Chris Cleave's Little Bee (2008) – Precarious Discourse, Discursive Precarity

Little Bee (2008) is Chris Cleave's second novel, preceded by *Incendiary* (2005), an epistolary novel recounting the mourning of a young mother after her husband and four-year-old son are killed during a bombing at a football match. In this subsequent novel, the prevalent topics include global political conflicts alongside the themes of violence and terror, as Cleave sheds light on the Nigerian oil wars, the inadequacies of the British immigration system, and the inhuman treatment of refugees by the former colonial power. The author constructs his narrative along the lines of a dual perspective in order to portray the two contrasting worlds: "the developed and the developing" (Cleave Q&A 2008). Cleave's career as a journalist arguably contributed to the representation of Sarah and Andrew's work environments, and his depiction of the detention centre was informed by his work

at Campsfield House at Oxfordshire, which, he admits, has enabled him to identify humour as a survival strategy in the accounts of numerous asylum seekers (Cleave in Wood 2012), to which his more recent work also testifies (Cleave 2016, 25-34)[1]. In an effort to provide a vivid narrative of serious incidents and to create a balance between joy and grief, Cleave incorporates humour in his writing as a counterbalance to the horror that people in precarious situations have had to endure (Cleave Q&A 2008; Seattle Reads 2011). Borrowing from Judith Butler, I claim that the novel thus more generally solicits "images of distant suffering in ways that compel our concern and move us to act, that is, to voice our objection and register our resistance to such violence through concrete political means" (Butler 2012, 135). In addition, the novel addresses the idea of "ethical relations" that are necessary for developing a willingness for cohabitation with even those who are distant, or "'human' in the abstract" (Butler 2012, 138).

Cleave asserts that *Little Bee* is not based on a true story, but that his main inspiration for the writing of this novel was the 2006 case of Angolan refugee Manuel Bravo, who hanged himself shortly before he and his 13-year-old son were due to be deported. With his suicide, Bravo wanted to ensure his son's stay in the UK as an unaccompanied minor (Cleave Q&A 2008; Herbert and Judd 2006). At the age of 16, the Nigerian girl Little Bee is also an unaccompanied minor, who nevertheless faces

deportation due to her illegal status in the UK. Another child character in the novel is Charlie, based on Cleave's 4-year-old son, who at that time identified with Batman (Cleave Q&A 2008). The author additionally researched Nigerian English and Jamaican English to create distinctive speech styles appropriate to the different characters in the novel (Cleave Q&A 2008). In order to highlight the 'haves' and 'have-nots', the socially accepted and the wilfully 'othered', Cleave differentiates not only between the perception of the two narrators, Little Bee and Sarah, and the overlaps and gaps in their knowledge, but also between their usage of vocabulary, grammar, and idiom (Cleave Q&A 2008).

Cleave's *Little Bee* is a novel told from the alternating explicitly intradiegetic homodiegetic narrative perspectives (Genette 1980, 248) of the two main characters, Little Bee and Sarah, in which each change of the narrating I is clearly demarcated by the opening of a new chapter. Interestingly, the two different titles of the novel, *Little Bee* (in the USA) and *The Other Hand* (in the UK)[2], also allude to the two protagonists, thereby also engaging in a triangular transatlantic dialogue. Despite the different vocabulary, style, and impressions of the two narrators, the idea of survival unites them by interweaving their perceptions in a moving dialogue. The two narrative perspectives interrelate at several levels: firstly, they complement each other in the retelling of the story; secondly, they inter-lap, as each of the narrators represents the

other in the recounting, adding, accordingly, to each woman's image as both character and narrator. Thirdly, as the creation of the image of each of the narrators is inevitably a constructed one, in and through the representation of the other, the commentary on the other character-narrator also serves as an implicit self-characterisation. This complex interaction of the two main characters highlights the narrators' unconscious responses to the descriptions of the actions by the other, confirming, rejecting, or adding to them. As Laura Savu argues, the shared construction of the narrative by the two voices "challenges the politics of subject formation that necessitates the making of 'the other' […] which have been relegated to the global periphery and to the static identities without agencies" (Savu 2014, 92). The predominant presence of Bee as narrator of her story over the other parallel plot of Sarah's life also plays an important role in the novel's emphasis on the refugee narrative, highlighting her ambivalent identity. Although Bee finds herself denaturalised and robbed of her identity (Cleave 2008, 19), her conscious adoption of the Queen's English is still influenced by Nigerian English, both in her effort to distance herself from it, and in the usage of culture-specific idioms and words. Ironically, Sarah earns her living through writing in the British English idiom, hence the two narrative voices interact to develop an argument regarding the prestige and profitability of the British Standard.

Apart from the symbolic dialogue between Little Bee and Sarah – due to the chapter division, they do not really communicate with each other – Little Bee also employs the communicative function of the narrator (Genette 1980, 255-256), as she occasionally directly addresses the reader using the second-person pronoun, thus buying into Butler's idea of addressing the host and asking for "a willingness for cohabitation with even those who are distant, or '"human" in the abstract" (Butler 2012, 138). At the beginning of the novel, Bee contrasts the inquisitive and the amazed responses of "the […] girls from back home" with a second-person 'you' (Cleave 2008, 6), who would immediately understand her expressions without interrupting her for clarifications. Thus, she positions herself as the narrator, who imagines the story as a dialogue with the addressee, as she comments on the fact that the reason for her spending two years learning the Queen's English is "so that you and I could speak like this without an interruption" (Cleave 2008, 6). This relationship is not affected by the questionable reliability of each of the narrators, as both accounts are affected by specific traumatic experiences.

In addition, the novel incorporates dramatic irony into the characters' knowledge gaps, which take place in each other's absence, e.g. during conversations between Lawrence (Sarah's lover) and Sarah concerning Bee's faith, and in the disclosure that Bee has been hiding her knowledge of Andrew's suicide. The symbolic dialogue

between the two narrators encoded in the novel's structure is therefore marked by ambiguity, and, as a careful reading reveals, by subtle implicit hints of foreshadowing that are skilfully incorporated into the subsequent narration. In what follows, I will investigate the construction of the novel's discourse more closely, with an emphasis on the postcolonial precarity of the refugees depicted, as it relates to their non-standard speech and the broken dialogue that pushes them to the margins of society.

Cleave's novel *Little Bee* shows differing yet predominantly negative attitudes of British citizens towards New Englishes, such as Jamaican English and Nigerian English, and thereby calls attention to the contemporary role of Standard British English and the Received Pronunciation (RP) for refugees who flee to the UK. The first major incident in which usage of non-native English is shown as a deficiency is when Yvette, one of the girls with whom Little Bee is illegally released from detention, is unable to call a taxi, and her directions "[…] the place I is right now is called Black Hill Immigration Removal" are met with the response "[y]ou people are scum" (Cleave 2008, 12; italics i.o.). Apart from the directness with which she formulates her expression, its indeterminability, foreignness, and distance from the British Standard, in conjunction with the name of the immigration centre, have an unsettling effect on the local taxi driver. When confronted with Yvette's hybrid language

and the identity he associates with it, he activates a defence mechanism through the use of generalisation and insult. Pidgins and creoles are recognised as prime examples of linguistic hybridity (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 2007, 108), and according to Bhabha's description of hybridity, represents a questioning of authority (Bhabha 1994, 113). As Robert Phillipson points out, the production of a new language as a representation of the native identity is in opposition to the "linguistic ideology" (Phillipson 1992, 117) implicit in the imperial demands for uniformity and blind mimicking of what they consider to be their superior voice. Thus, by exemplifying the negative attitude towards linguistic hybridity, Cleave exposes the roots and modes of contemporary racism, and the continuing colonial practice of the uniformisation of linguistic imperialism.

The textbook *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (Home Office 2005), which aims to assimilate refugees into British life, culture, and values, and to instruct them on "how to fit in" (Cleave 2008, 49), is a prime example of the misconceptions of postmodern missionarism. Cleave opens his novel with a quotation from *Life in the UK,* which, ironically, contains a typographical error, and in one of his interviews he further criticises the low quality of the manual (Cleave Q&A 2008). In the initial stages of the spread of English as a world language, Braj Kachru points out that the colonizers did not teach their language too well "on 'non-in-group' Asians and Africans with the underlying idea

being that the colonizers' code, if shared equally with the colonized, would reduce the distance between the rulers and the ruled" (Kachru 1990 [1986], 22). The unequal knowledge distribution in the detention centres resembles the imperialist modes of inadequate language education that is not only ill-suited to the cultural needs of the particular country, but is also deliberately poor. As the novel shows, Britain continues to give selective and unrefined knowledge to its potential, yet unwanted, subjects, and this can be interpreted not only as negligence, but also as a means of securing the superiority of the representatives of the British education system and nation. The stereotype of the uneducated, 'savage', and illegal immigrant that is thereby constructed, combined with the dehumanising depiction of refugees in the media (Esses and Medianu 2013; Allan and Blinder 2013), accordingly leads to a surge of racism, xenophobia and lack of empathy, as well as erasure. The erasure that follows the reduction of the language of the refugee (or, in other words, subaltern) to noise, gibberish, or animalistic utterances, similar to the Caliban-Prospero paradigm, is accompanied by the reduction of the asylee to a precarious position within the hegemonic (state) power and refugee regime. The widespread prejudice towards refugees as "a drain on resources" (Cleave 2008, 246) and as unable to integrate (Dempster and Hargrave 2017), is thus partly rooted in the restricted knowledge resources provided to detained victims of persecution and, more generally, refugees.

To counter the argument that the discrimination exemplified in the case of Yvette may be motivated solely by the taxi driver's individual xenophobic attitude towards detained immigrants, the novel provides another example of language usage. When Bee modifies her way of speaking and attempts to replicate the Queen's English in an assumed British identity, she succeeds in convincing another cab driver to come to the detention centre. However, her misinterpretation of the different meanings of the word "cock", and her kindly-meant calling of the driver one results in the following response, "[*d/on't they teach you monkeys any manners in the jungle*" (Cleave 2008, 57; italics i.o.), and his driving away. Here, the unusual semanticisation of the word "cock" not only breaks the dialogue, but is also met with degradation and dehumanisation in response. As a consequence, Bee learns that the markedness and difference of her utterances may stigmatise her as an outsider, and she thus tries to mimic the British means of expression in terms of content and formulation.

Little Bee's language learning is juxtaposed with the first-language acquisition of Charlie, who is taught the British standard by his mother, Sarah. As a four-year-old child, he also uses non-standard language, and is constantly corrected for the purpose of helping him to speak properly. Little Bee, however, who has been brought up and, presumably, educated in Nigerian English, is prevented from using her language, despite its

official recognition as a standard variety, and faces degradation and mockery during her learning of British English. This comparison shows the double standard epitomised in society's understanding of a child's language acquisition and, on the contrary, the humiliation faced by refugees in their effort to learn the host country's language, a situation which can be defined as "postcolonial linguistic precarity".

The significant role the language of the receiving country plays for the survival of the refugees is also represented in the case of the two unnamed girls who leave the detention centre with Little Bee and Yvette. One of these girls deliberately remains silent throughout most of her appearances in the novel and does not disclose her name, out of fear of the impending danger of her identity being revealed. Even though her case has been officially confirmed, the terror she has experienced prevents her from recognising any place as a safe place. This constant fear of being discovered by the terrorisers from the home village is also revealed in the character of Little Bee, yet, in contrast to Bee's reliance on Sarah, the unnamed girl does not allow herself to trust anyone, and her lost belief in humanity permanently silences her. The other fully mute character, whom Bee calls "Sari Girl", is completely disempowered by her inability to speak the language of the host country. She is stuck in constant knowledge deprivation and disorientation, and her release from Black Hill is not characterised by

a feeling of freedom, but by being trapped in hopelessness, and metaphorically speaking, in utter precarity. Her suicide in the barn following her 'release', in conjunction with the many other suicide cases in the detention centre, signifies the fatal consequences of flight on the refugee's mental health. Following the maxim introduced in the novel as "*[t]o survive, you must look good or talk good*" (Cleave 2008, 6; italics i.o.), refugees are deprived of an identity of their own and, to survive, must conform to the host country's beauty ideals, speak in the way that is considered 'proper', or sell their bodies.

To be more precise, Little Bee uses a form of linguistic hybridity – and in that sense, ambivalence – as she combines her imitation of the Queen's English with references to expressions characteristic of her native country and culture, thus producing a unique process of hybridisation, which, according to Bakhtin's discourse theory, can be described as a process of hybridisation that effectively illuminates the mimicked social voice (Bakhtin 1981, 361). Hybridisation, according to Bakhtin, is the mixture of two social languages, or in Bakhtin's terms, of a two-fold linguistic consciousness within an utterance (Bakhtin 1981, 358). Bakhtin views the process of creating a new hybrid as an illumination of an individual's language and ideology through someone else's language, and an overcoming of the illusory otherness of another's language (Bakhtin 1981, 361; 365). Applied to Little Bee's use of language, it becomes obvious that

she does not identify with the Queen's English and its underlying conduct and values, but instead, engages in an imitation of its social ideal. Only after this 'mirroring image' is constructed, is she allowed to participate in a dialogue with the citizens of the receiving country in the sense of what Bhabha perceives as mockery, which complements the notion of mimicry, and thus the constant threat of having to use the civilising imperialistic discourse (Bhabha 1994, 86).

Throughout the novel, Little Bee alludes to the replacement of her native language and culture with the British one. She emphasises the artificiality of this act of masking her identity through the strong presence of the colour grey in her narrative, the colour she also chooses for the official flag of refugees (Cleave 2008, 76). In the paradoxical essence of being a person of colour who is yet without a colour, grey epitomises both the denaturalisation of refugees as well as their state of 'limbo', in other words their liminality – and, by extension, their postcolonial precarity. In fact, her description of a refugee as "a Halfling, a child of an unnatural mating, an unfamiliar face of the moon" (Cleave 2008, 8) represents the threshold position, or, as Michael Jackson claims, "the wild oscillations between polar extremes – here and there, past and present […] immediate and imagined" (Jackson 2013, 101). Moreover, her statement fully incorporates the sense of Bakhtin's notion of intentional hybridity (Bakthin 1981, 360-361), as her

narrative is formulated in a hybrid (double-voiced) language. The feeling of in-betweenness, which characterises the refugee's non-belonging, and thus, precarity, is given a strongly negative connotation in its depiction as an assumed impurity, a typification of the discourse of a supposedly corrupt and degenerate species (Cleave 2008, 8; 57). Here, the recognisable expressions of another's language are those that dominate the media and social discourse, and by imitating them, Bee exposes and mocks the derogatory discourse about refugees.

Little Bee not only learns the Queen's English but also successfully replicates the allegedly authoritative social voices that come along with it. This can be explained by Frantz Fanon's assertion that "[t]o speak a language is to take on a world, a culture" and just as in Fanon's experience, Little Bee is also given "honorary citizenship" by replicating the "white man's language" (Fanon 1986 [1967], 38). Eventually, her effort to sound non-refugee in her taxi phone call is rewarded with an affirmation "[…] you don't talk like one of them" (Cleave 2008, 15), enhancing the postcolonial "us and them" paradigm. Without her outer appearance as a black woman able to be seen, evaluated, and stereotyped by the host culture, her imitation of the prestigious standard language ensures her treatment as an individual who is British enough to make use of the public services provided.

Bee's understanding of the attitude she needs to replicate is grounded in the colonial savage-civilised binary

construct imposed on her encounters with the Western world. Ironically, her image of the savage is constituted by the overly polite expression of gratitude (Cleave 2008, 3-4) and the linguistic richness of the native variety of her own tongue, which are exact opposites of the occidental stereotype of the savage as unrefined, crude, and barbarian. The shifts to Nigeria-specific expressions in Cleave's novel are often indicated by the expression "in my country" (Cleave 2008, 46) and set apart from "in your country" (Cleave 2008, 189). In her exploration of the demands of the host language and culture, Little Bee also puts varying degrees of Nigerian-ness and their effect on the English locals to the test to determine the assimilationist needs within the framework of her own self-construction. For example, culture-specific proverbs help to build a symbolic bridge between the two worlds and provide basis for transcultural communication. Yet, Little Bee invents proverbs, which are met with two contrasting responses: the friendly approval of Sarah, who appreciates Bee's imagination, and the negative disregard of Lawrence, whose response is demeaning. The invented proverb "*A wolf must be a wolf and a dog must be dog*" (Cleave 2008, 180; italics i.o.) is itself a hybrid construct that employs non-African symbols (e.g. wolf and dog) to signify an assumedly Nigerian identity, and thus mocks the inscription of her own national identity. Lawrence's statement that people in Europe "[a]re a little more house-trained" (Cleave 2008, 186), is intended to safeguard Western superiority and to secure the divide between the supposed First and Third Worlds. Through-

out the novel, Lawrence's hostile attitude towards Little Bee becomes apparent in his repetition of the derogatory use of "civilization" (Cleave 2008, 216), which he uses to assert the image of Bee as an underdeveloped subject of inferior status ("born-again citizen of the developing world", Cleave 2008, 8; italics mine), and thus to retain a distance in their power relation, putting Bee in a position of postcolonial precarity. In another instance, Little Bee mocks Lawrence's and the overall Western world's distorted conception of civilisation by exposing their perverted pride of killing with a computer mouse click (Cleave 2008, 241), and contrasting it to the insane barbaric soldiers in her home country. This is only one of numerous instances in which Bee employs irony and wit to respond to the precarity that dominates her life.

To be more precise, Bee's language is richly stylised with a great number of literary devices, among them, metaphors, such as "creature […] whose past has crumbled to dust" (Cleave 2008, 19), simile, "I felt like the Queen of England" (Cleave 2008, 141), paradox, "I had killed myself back to life" (Cleave 2008, 49), and complex imagery that makes use of personification or the rhetorical question:

> Who says a Nigerian girl must speak in fallen English, as if English had collided with Ibo, high in the upper atmosphere, and rained down into her mouth into a shower that half-drowns her and leaves her choking

> up sweet tales about the bright African colors and
> the taste of fried plantain? (Cleave 2008, 8)

Bee's narrative, as the quotations reveal, revolves around finding the means to describe the unspeakable refugee experience, starting from life before the crisis, through the traumatic persecution and flight, up until the ill treatment and stereotypical representation in the host country. Yet, Bee also engages in an inherent critique, which is often achieved through irony, something that "'happens' between the said and the unsaid" (Hutcheon 1995, 12) where the unsaid is not simply an inversion of the said, but is always different (Hutcheon 1995, 12). The quotation above also reveals a type of colonial missionary idea that imposes English on its colonial subjects, leading to a hybrid concept of language in which the stereotypical (tourist) Africa discourse is related as if in an orientalising fairy tale.

In another instance, Bee replicates Western discourse when she refers to Yvette's purple outfit, remarking that "[o]ne has to go through a very great number of charity boxes […] to put together an outfit that is truly an *ensemble*" (Cleave 2008, 9, italics i.o.). The irony of this statement is multi-layered, as Bee initially mocks the detainees' reality, as they are not allowed to work and therefore do not have any choice but to live off charity, ironically addressing the precarious situation that they find themselves in. The subsequent use of the word "en-

semble", which originates in the French language, hints at some subtle criticism of the supposed linguistic imperialism of British English, a language that has its roots in a diversity of languages and so can also be viewed as a hybrid language, but whose contemporary speakers denounce pidgin, creole, and other varieties.

Another instance in which Bee's irony fulfils its subversive function is her commentary on refugeeism. By voicing the irony of being a refugee in a world where there is no refuge (Cleave 2008, 46), she exposes the misconceptions about the image of the host country as an embodiment of the Promised Land, where trauma is supposed to end, but where, rather than rescue, precarity awaits. The posed emphasis on the transience of the condition of refugees and the impossibility of the host country actually functioning as a refuge is also achieved through the symbolic subversion of established social prejudices that view refugees as economic migrants harboured in the safe haven of the social benefits provided by the government and the host country, which Lawrence also addresses when he uses "harbour" to describe Bee's place in Sarah's home and life (Cleave 2008, 185). Bee's narrative continuously aims to refute this image through the thread/threat of her imagined suicides running throughout the novel, which also attest to immense impact of her trauma. The precariousness of refugee life is already illustrated in Bee's imagined design of their official flag: a worn-out grey brassiere on a broom handle (Cleave 2008, 76), which ironically characterises

the refugees' poverty, low social status, hiddenness, and expected servile behaviour. The stereotypical image of illegal immigrants stealing jobs and burdening the economic system of the host country (Page 2009, 3), which is also often projected onto refugees, is parodied in Bee's account of the refugees' struggle and their inadequate treatment in the UK immigration institutions.

A considerable number of the ironic remarks in the novel are marked by an intrinsic dark humour. However, Bee's gradual elaboration on the real agents behind her tragic past increases the bitterness of her irony, and distances it from humour. One such instance can be found in her observation at a gas station: "[t]he gasoline flowing through the pump made a high-pitched sound, as if the screaming of my family was still dissolved in it" (Cleave 20078, 181). This synesthetic image voices a social critique towards the continuous exploitation of African natural resources in Nigeria's "neo-colonial" (McLaughlin 2013, 60) reality. The echo of the struggle in the West to produce the essential and unquestioned commodity of gasoline shows, as Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg maintains, the unembellished truth of the violated economic, social, and cultural rights of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta (Swanson Goldberg 2015, 66). Thus, the use of irony here serves to demystify the social injustice of a neo-capitalist continuation of colonial exploitative practices and to subvert the profiteer's belief that this is the proper world order.

Conclusion

In my paper, I have provided numerous examples that illustrate Chris Cleave's skilful utilisation of irony to express subtle criticism through the 'unsaid'. He thereby points his finger at the burning issues of flight, precarity, asylum-seeking, and refugeeism in the UK. The often humorous undertones of the account reflect, as Reichl and Stein argue, the postcolonial subject's desire for agency and liberation from the power imbalance (Reichl and Stein 2005, 9). Little Bee's narrative therefore achieves its liberation from the usual silencing authoritative discourse of us/them, rich and poor, state authority and asylum seeker, which she exposes, refutes, and subverts. In this framework, the refugee's identity undergoes intricate changes during and after the journey to the host country. The deliberate survival strategy behind this constant re-construction of the refugee's identity draws not upon assimilation, but rather, upon replication, which, at the bottom line, is grounded in language. As Chris Cleave's character of Little Bee demonstrates, language functions as a powerful tool for combatting passivity. Irony, in this particular instance, serves as a stylistic device not only to assert the creative agency of the postcolonial precarious subject, but to facilitate its highly intellectual means of resistance, and to thus unsettle the stereotype of the wild and savage stranger who is only able to speak in a "fallen English" (Cleave 2008, 8). Little Bee's narrative – in contradistinction to Sar-

ah's – in its replication of the Queen's English and the usage of ironic and humorous undertones, addresses the underlying social inequality of host culture and refugee, in spite of the intricately interwoven colonial past and postcolonial present that both have shared. After having examined the function of the multiple voices employed in Little Bee, the conclusion drawn highlights the novel's critique of a plethora of issues, ranging from global neo-colonial exploitation and linguistic imperialism to local mistreatment of refugees in the UK. The dialogical structure of the novel thus proves to effectively facilitate a necessary debate about the precarious lives of refugees under the conditions of a double-edged degrading discourse and the practice of a refugee regime that also enhances the discursive precarity of the participants.

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Can the Precariat Sing? Standing in Lotman's Light of Cultural Semiotics

Ariktam Chatterjee & Arzoo Saha

> In the most Biblical sense, I am beyond repentance
> But in the cultural sense, I just speak in future tense
> (Gaga 2011, n.pg.)

In his preface to the Bloomsbury Academic edition of *The Rise of the Precariat* published in 2016, Guy Standing observes:

> …more of those in the precariat have come to see themselves, not as failures or shirkers, but as sharing a common predicament with many others. This recognition – a move from feelings of isolation, self-pity or self-loathing, to a sense of collective strength – is

> a precondition of political action…It is organizing, and struggling to define a new forward march. (x)

This is a noteworthy evolution in Standing's formulation from the time this influential study was first published in the form of a book in 2011, and later in 2016, where the precariat was seen to be too diverse and divided to consolidate themselves into a class. It was calibrated repeatedly as a 'class-in-the-making'. The group was never a homogenous one. Constituencies were numerous and except for an exploitative and alienated relationship with a neoliberal global economic structure (itself in various degrees of gradation), there was no platform of shared interest. In many ways, it seemed to subvert the notion of shared interest, which was a hallmark of all prior class formation – or what constituted class formation. However, Standing's present observation betrays a sense that the class has become consolidated. That it is organized implies that it has somehow, imperceptibly, agreed on certain common shared signs of identification – that it has developed, in other words, its culture. Any agency is built around its culture, defined by its cultural signs, which it imbibes and produce in turn. This paper is an attempt to look at the precariat as a cultural group, and look at some of its cultural expressions. Later, it also ventures to expose the other side of this cultural consolidation – the possibility of the state's use of culture to anticipate and forestall the political action stated above.

Max Weber was one of the earliest theorists to understand that the question of class and culture go hand in hand. One is defined by the other, and in turn, defines the other. Often the culture and the class become isomorphic since the class is often identified through its perceptible cultural signs. If the precariats can be identified as a culture group, then what are the typical manifestations of its culture. Since the question of culture comes up, it leads us like many questions related to culture do, to the question of methodology. Culture is identified by signs, and a sign by definition is something that stands for something else. A culture converts a sign into a symbol, a function sign, which takes on meaning generated within the cultural system itself. A symbol is difficult to define, since every epistemology, every discipline, defines it according to its convenience to serve its precise epistemological purpose; 'symbol as an indefinable term is suitable for conveying the cognition of the incognizable' (Torop 2005, 161). The symbol in Saussure's linguistics, for instance, is different from Tillich's understanding of religious language as 'symbolic'. Then precisely what definition of a symbol will we station ourselves in? In other words, with what definition of culture will be followed in our investigation and draw our conclusions? My answer would be to consider culture as a semiosphere as proposed by Yuri Lotman, one of the central cultural theorists from the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics. The reasons for choosing this model over others is something I will try to explain below. But before that, it would be appropriate to present in brief Lot-

man's understanding of culture as 'semiosphere' as first presented in his influential 1990 book, *The Universe of the Mind.*

Yuri Lotman: Culture and/as Semiosphere

The Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics is one of the prominent schools in studying culture, one of whose most representative works is Yuri Lotman's detailed exposition of cultural semiotics published in 1990, *The Universe of the Mind.* The particular significance of this text concerning our present enquiry resides in the fact that like Standing, Lotman often employs a spatial metaphor in isolating his culture group. Deploying a spatial metaphor automatically entails the factor of spatial demarcation, the forming of an 'inside/outside' paradigm. Standing is insistent that there is an 'outside' to the precariat 'inside', from where it is demarcated; and there are 'insides' within the 'inside', stressing that the precariat is not after all a homogenous group. It is not very different from the way Lotman's description of 'culture' as 'semiosphere', a term that Lotman adopts from Vernadsky's biosphere, as a space that is defined by signs, informed and is informed by signs (Lotman 1990: 123). The relationship of a cultural text and its participants in a semiosphere is analogous to the definition of an organism and its surrounding habitat, forming together the biosphere. Tartu-Moscow semiotics simultaneously refers to a noosphere, the pure world of ideas. A semiosphere can be understood as occupying the space between the two.

Thus, with the biosphere, it shares a relationship both of an analogy as well as a gradation. Any mutual transaction has meaning because it is always/already being performed within a cultural set-up, it is 'immersed' in it – and what it is immersed in is the semiosphere. Regarding the structure of the 'semiosphere', Lotman states:

> Throughout the whole space of semiosis, from social jargon and age group slang to fashion, there is an also a constant renewal of codes. So any One language turns out to be immersed in a semiotic space and it can only function by interaction with that space. The unit of semiosis, the smallest functioning mechanism, is not the separate language but the whole semiotic space of the culture in question. This is the space we term the semiosphere. (Lotman 1990, 125)

It must be obvious by now that the question that is being asked is whether the precariat can be understood as a semiosphere? To answer this question satisfactorily, we can first take an overview of Lotman's theory of semiosphere as a cultural unit, and then see whether it matches our understanding of the precariat or not.

Not unlike the Russian Formalists, who can be stated to be their theoretical predecessor, the Tartu Semiotics school applies communication theory as its point of departure in understanding language and then culture. This position is based on the premise, that language – as a model through which reality is understood and commu-

nicated – provides the model for all epistemology. Communication, in its simplest and most basic sense, is the transmission of information. The first important step in defining culture is to ascertain the channel through which its information – the aggregate of the information that it provides in the form of heritage, and the forms it constitutes – is communicated. Lotman states that communication can be initiated and carried out through two channels. The first is the classic Jakobsonian model of the 'I-(s)he' communication, which can be pictorially represented as:

Message

Addresser ———————————— Addressee

The scope of such a communication, where the entire message is with the 'I' and will be completely received by the (s)he is rare, and is carried out only at the most basic level of information gathering in natural language. At the other end of this communication, resides the situation where the communication takes place through a collapse of the distinction of the addresser and the addressee, in what is termed communication through the 'I-I' channel. Here the listener is in complete acknowledgement of the information which is being given by the addressee. An extreme form of this communication is poetic language. Let us stress here that this is not actual 'poetry' which is more complicated because it releases communication on both levels simultaneously. But as of

now, the working of the 'I-I- communication needs to be analyzed at some depth, following Lotman's understanding.

The I-I communication (auto communication), typically takes the I – s(he) communication (natural communication) as carries out a rhetorical shift. It is symbolic where the first is semantic. It translates the purely semantic into the symbolic. In many cases, this shift can be so complete, that the semantic is completely obscured by the symbolic – as we can find in abstract art. Rhythms, repetitions, patterns and symmetry are the impositions of auto communication over natural communication. In a cultural expression, the addresser typically distances herself from herself as the addresser and carries out this shift by putting the economy of natural communication into the rhythmic necessities of auto communication. However, in its entirety, this auto communication needs to be again presented as a natural communication to the addressee, who is now a third party to the process, the listener, audience – the recipient of this production, who needs to be familiar with the cultural code of this artefact to decode it. Thus, culture typically operates by simultaneously deploying its communication in the auto and the natural axes.

Of the many ways to define culture, one prominent direction has been considering it as a constituent of "patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired

and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas, especially their attached values; culture systems many, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning element for future action" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952, 151). This has been generally summarized as something learned, shared, transmitted and shaping perception by Paul M. Collins. However, there is a rejoinder to this view from the Semiotic side of Cultural studies, which stresses that "culture is a series of inter-worked systems of construable signs (or symbols), which do not deliver up power but provide a context for human existence (Collins 2006, 23). For Geertz, therefore, the job of culture is not to provide answers to existentialist questions but to identify how, in a given context, answers to those questions have been provided by those in the cultures themselves. That is summarily the job of the cultural analyst. To quote Geertz:

> Culture is best seen …as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers calls 'programs') – for the governing of behaviour (Geertz 1973, 52).

We can isolate two strands from Geertz's formulation and then introduce Lotman's semiotic understanding

into our analysis. First, there are set of programs which are implemented through a metaphorizaiton of meaning and are transmitted through the form of a book or a handbook. Secondly, there is a context within which meanings are made and each meaningful act contributes to that context. Third, and most importantly, Geertz emphasizes the fact that culture presents a plan to provide answers to questions it raises or designs for itself to answer, and is thus, self-referential.

Lotman's view of culture has been observed as a self-referential system. However, that does not necessarily turn it into a closed system. On the other hand, influences seep within its threshold, giving it a controlled dynamism within a perceptible stasis. To quote Lotman:

At all stages of development (of culture), there are contacts with texts coming in from cultures which formerly lay beyond the boundaries of the given semiosphere. These invasions, sometimes by separate texts, and sometimes by whole cultural layers, variously affect the internal structure of the 'world picture' of the culture we are talking about. So across any synchronic section of the semiosphere, different languages at different stages of development are in conflict, and some texts are immersed in languages not their own, while the codes to decipher them with maybe entirely absent. (Lotman 1990, 151)

This influence is all the more pronounced under the neo-liberal setup since the economic boundaries have

become diluted. The reason for that is obvious. With the vouching of neoliberal ethics of economic propagation leading to a rentier economy and the emergence of the silicon revolution, it has become possible to shift jobs to sites where labour is cheapest. The proximal necessity of the capital and the labour force necessary to carry out its mode of production has been annulled. Thus, invasion of extra cultural text within a given cultural threshold has become more possible now than ever before.

Yuri Lotman and Guy Standing: Thinking in Space

Yuri Lotman and Guy Standing come from different academic interests to study human action through different methodologies. However, they have worked at the same time more or less, and have observed common phenomena. On close reading, there are overlaps in the spheres of their study. What we need here is not an account of the ontological overlaps between Lotman and Standing, but certain areas that will justify the application of Lotman's cultural model to study Standing's category of class in the making about to turn into a class. Peeter Torop considers the concept of semiosphere to be necessarily meta disciplinary. Although proposed by Lotman, its potential has been realized through creative application in fields which are diverse and often quite remote from Lotman's immediate field of argument (Torop 2005, 161). That would connote that its application in analyzing, at least identifying, the cultural space of one of the most significant emergent classes of our

time would not be out of place. It would yet, not be quite impertinent, to schematize at least some ways in which this trans-disciplinary method can be justified.

1. The most important point of commonality is the spatial metaphor that they both employ in their methodologies. For Standing, the precariat, which is a class defined in its relationship to economy is continuously explained and deployed in a spatial metaphor, which like all spaces is defined by a boundary. This boundary is constantly restructuring itself, accommodating new influences, turning the 'outside' into the 'inside', and at times may churn out the 'inside' to the 'outside' – but the inside/outside is still at least cognitively maintained – as a prerequisite to be defined as a 'space'. Standing, in defining the precariat, asks a question: 'who enters the precariat?' and then answers it by saying, 'One answer is everybody, actually' (Standing 2016, 69). The application of the italicized verb makes it quite clear that he conceives of the group as a space that can be intruded in, or which can exclude part of its member. Inclusion is easy – since anybody who enters into a precarious relationship with the economy which is ultimately exploitative turns into a precariat. The exclusion is more subtle, but the stakes are higher. The eradication of the entire class is the objective of this class – which, according to Standing, is the peculiarity of this class (2016, 69-70). More and more are being included to garner force for an

ultimate exclusion. Either way, we cannot work our way out of a spatial metaphor while defining the precariat in spatial terms. Similarly, Lotman's understanding of the semiosphere as a cultural space has been often noted. The spatial metaphor in Lotman is strong, and that too as a self-referential space (Noth 2006, 149).

2. Both Lotman and Standing stress the need for a boundary, the threshold of confinement of the onto-logical space. At the same time, they both assert the ev-er-changing nature of this boundary (Standing 2016: 69, Lotman 1990: 136). For both Standing and Lotman, the boundary is a locus that delineates the constituent space but is at the same time the most vibrant site of activity. As a result, it is the most unstable.

3. For Lotman, as well as for Standing, the constituent space is not homogenous. There are cultures within a culture. For example, Lotman comments on the cultural space:

> At all stages of development (of culture), there are contacts with texts coming in from cultures which formerly lay beyond the boundaries of the given semiosphere. These invasions, sometimes by separate texts, and sometimes by whole cultural layers, variously affect the internal structure of the 'world picture' of the culture we are talking about. So across

> any synchronic section of the semiosphere different languages at different stages of development are in conflict, and some texts are immersed in languages not their own, while the codes to decipher them with maybe entirely absent. (Lotman 1990, 126)

Thus, we can understand that the cultural space of the precariat is a semiosphere with all its characteristic features intact. It is within this semiosphere that the cultural texts will be produced, which will, in turn, develop a semiosphere, resulting in the formation of other cultural texts.

A common aspect of spatial thinking that brings both Lotman and Standing together is that just as on the one hand they think the internal spatial orientation as varied and non-homogenous, they also consider the semiotic threshold of the space as one that is continuously re-oriented. This reorientation can affect the spatial extension – it can be resized. Influences that are considered 'foreign' can be appropriated within a cultural space thus resulting in an extension and adding to the textual richness from which the semiosphere gains its semiotic signification. Since we have already brought in the term of 'textuality', it is, therefore, important to understand the precise way in which Lotman uses the term in reference to the semiosphere. Culture is based on transmission on one hand, and addition on the other. It inherits and passes certain core signs within itself, and uses that sign

to produce new artefacts, which in turn becomes a part of the cultural space. Lotman's theory of culture gives great importance to cultural transmission, which means the way in which a particular text-type exists as defining factor of a semiosphere, and inspires similar text types which in turn define the semiosphere. There are two modes of cultural transmission, according to this theory. There are texts, or books, which provides the model of the culture. Then there are sets of rules which the culture produce which retain the established position of the given text. These are handbooks. They lay down rules. Together, texts and handbooks define the cultural modality of the semiosphere.

To come back to the question of the precariat cultural space, we, therefore, need to asks, what is the tradition that it is using, what are the texts on the basis of which the actual cultural handbooks or precise works are being produced? The next part of the article will show how nuanced and problematized the precariat cultural space can be. On the one side, there is an attempt to deliver signs from completely different dimensions to make that particular semiosphere 'known' and thus controllable. These attempts are both on the part of the state and the private agencies, who together carry out the precariatising process, albeit in different ways. However, we will also see how the semiosphere will be extended to include forms considered foreign, like rap, wall art or stand-up comedy, to create the precariat voice of resis-

tance, thus working towards a distinct cultural identity. Here, we will concentrate only on Indian rap as a cultural expression of the Indian precariat.

Signs of Control: Private and State Appropriation of the Constituency

The precariat in India began to emerge very much along with the global precariat, with the introduction of global neoliberal policies in India. Their formation is not different from what constitutes the global precariat. Standing stresses that one of the main features of the neoliberal economic policy is the convenience it has delivered in waylaying production to wherever the labour is cheap in a global scale, with the development of Big-Tech and Big-Pharma groups. Since India, along with China, has been the greatest providers of cheap labour around the world, it has one of the largest groups of precariats – as short term contract workers, workers in Call centres and outsourcing firms who could be hired and fired at short notices, a large number of underpaid women employees at low-end desk jobs, migrants and minorities who have been subject of often shameless vote-bank oriented politics, a large poor section who live in pitiful conditions within urban spaces in a consolidated and ghettoised manner, seniors getting into consultancy jobs due ever-lowering pension interests, private tutors, contractual employees in various government departments to hedge unemployment, workers who have been sublet by rec-

ognized government agencies, interns and the educated who are repeatedly trying and failing to enter into the salariat. It is a clear participant in the rentier economy by ensuring that a large portion of its resource is dependant on its monopoly on its asset (here intellectual asset) which it rents out to whoever is willing to pay the price, rather than the introduction of any reusable capital. By placing itself on one extreme, India is one of the biggest sustainers of the rentier state economy. Now, with such a substantial precariat population, the question is what are the cultural texts they will produce? What will be the cultural signs they will rally behind? And what will be state's response to it?

The precariat, as we have seen till now, is a varied group with constituencies as varied as educated interns to incarcerated prisoners. They are often made subject to cultural appropriation, for which the symbols are borrowed from completely different spheres of identity. The first example that we will look at is an advertisement. The picture was published in one of the leading Bengali Daily newspapers on 15.02.2020 (Anandabazar Patrika 7). It is a clear instance that brings into play some of the major cultural signs related to the growth of the precariat and its encouragement on the part of the market.

The precarious nature of the job is brought to fore by the sheer absence of any identity of the employer. The ambiguous term 'renowned publishers' denies the potential employee of any clear idea of the firm or the group she is going to work for, and thus robbing her of any possibility of appeal and placement of rights, making herself already a part of an exploitative system. The next sign is the complete overlapping of the categories of salary and compensation. Classically, compensation is provided to an employee in the case of some misfortune that occurs at the time of providing service to the employer and is generally provided once in a lump sum, while salary indicates a continuous liability. Salary is the amount rendered in exchange of service on, usually, a monthly basis. Colliding the two has been a notable feature of the neoliberal economy, and is now commonly used by all private agencies and corporate. The irony, missed upon by the employee who has become culturally ingrained in obfuscating the difference, is perhaps not missed upon by the employer. By colliding the two and making salary itself a compensation, as in here, the hiring agency clearly moves out of any responsibility of continuous employment, unless ironically indicating that working in the company itself is a misfortune where the salary must be understood as compensation. An opportunity to earn lucrative incentive makes clear that payment will be on a commission basis, and the employee will be continuously pressurized to perform out of her skin to meet targets, which are often unrealistic and stressful, resulting in anxiety for the employee.

If the signs of the advertisement are analyzed, we see that they are drawn from images of the salariat. The ubiquitous office bag, the tie and the scroll of paper presumably provide a promise of a class identity, which hedges the precarious nature of the opportunity. It is clearly an attempt to appropriate the cultural identity of the precariat through icons that are borrowed from elsewhere, a different semiosphere altogether, from a different and more stable time. Its promise is a promise of a different time, its call is a call for the precariat to deny its class identity – to deny the identity of the class itself as distinct. It is a subtle 'nudge' from the corporate to the precariat to define itself in borrowed cultural terms. In reality, it immerses the precariat more within its precariat identity through cleverly negotiated semiotic mediation. The second instance that we have is from a State point of view.

Standing has considered criminalization as one of the chief characteristics of the neoliberal state. In designating the criminalized as precariats from behind the bars, Standing states:

> A feature of globalization has been the growth of incarceration. Increasing numbers are arrested, charged and imprisoned, becoming denizens, without vital rights, mostly limited to a precariat existence. (Standing 2016, 102)

It has been observed by many that more and more people are being incarcerated, and the number of inmates has gone up manifold in many European and American correctional houses. The November 2006 report of 'Research from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency' reports incarceration rates in the US are four times the world average. Compared to India, it is 550% higher, as from Nigeria, which proves that India and Nigeria are almost equal in terms of imprisonment. Significantly, the report mentions that if the rest of the world followed the US lead incarceration policies and practices, the total number of incarceration worldwide would increase fivefold from 9.2 million to 47.6 million. Alfred Blumstein and Allen Beak examined the near tripling of the prison population during the period 1980 – 1996 and concluded that changes in crime explained only 12% of the prison rise, while changes in sentencing policy accounted for 88% of the increase. Of the many causes that explain the US system's overreliance on imprisonment, are 'public perceptions, political opportunism, and misdirected laws, as well as media coverage of worst cases – which negotiate the understanding of the relationship between the prison and the public'. This is an interesting observation since while Standing considers this as an ill-effect of the global economic policy, other related reasons include the images of prison and crime-punishment paradigms that the popular media has fed the public in such a way that the dramatic and immediate is highlighted over the stratified and layered legality

that goes into the process of incarceration and criminalization, and is a central aspect of prison life. Anderson states,

> Inside prison, people live outside the media's unblinking eye, and the general public probably knows less about imprisonment than about any other stage of the justice system. Because the majority of people have never been to a prison, either as visitor, 'resident', or staff member, other sources need to be drawn upon for understandings about the prison system. A wide range of cultural products "feed the popular imaginary with representations of life in prison", and Hollywood especially can be viewed as a discursive practice that fixes the meaning of prison itself. (Anderson 2015, 431)

Given the great influence of mainstream cinematic entertainment in India, the meaning may not be very different in this case. 'The mass media play a decisive role in the formation of punishment among the public; the increase in incarceration rates in Britain and Europe has been linked to media reporting of high-profile dramatic and isolated events. Media coverage of prisons and prison life is often inadequate and sensational; mass culture seems to make it easier for those in power to disseminate their views "but harder for marginal voices to talk back". (Anderson 2015, 432)

The state has always been systematic in absorbing the precariat through symbols of its own, to make its fail-

ure as a class an excuse for its success in administration. Standing refers to the large number of contractual jobs given out by the government without the benefits, protections or rights of the salariat, and present it as employment. This phenomenon is widespread as is often referred to as hedged unemployment. Yet, there are other modes of appropriation too. One can take a look at the various self-improvement programs introduced in the correction houses. Recently, the Dumdum Central Jail in Kolkata has also introduced its own radio station.

Standing stresses how the prisoners are used as a precariat force in the labour market. He states:

> ...countries as dissimilar to the United States, United Kingdom and India are moving in similar directions. India's largest prison complex outside Delhi, privatized of course, is using prisoners to produce a wide range of products, many sold online, with the cheapest labour to be found, working eight-hour shifts for six days a week'. (Standing 2016, 102)

This use of the labour from the inmates is coupled with the self-improvement programs that are introduced by the authorities to improve the lives of the criminalized, and with the intention of making them more suitable to jobs once released. Often these self-improvement programs take the form of cultural interactions and inculcations. In replacing the classical idea of the Foucauldian *panopticon*, it introduces the idea anew with the feel of

freedom. How the employment of self-improvement projects on the part of the authorities can benefit monitoring, as well as control, is evident in the research of Adeyeye and Oyewushi carried out in the female correctional homes in Lagos State Nigeria. The inmates were divided into two groups, one below 17 and the others above it. They were given books by Nigerian authors to read, and it was found that 'after reading and discussion of themes in the book, the participants had more understanding of what good behaviour entailed. They became remorseful and sober which was evident during the discussions'. (Adeyeye and Oyewushi 2017, n.pg.)

While bibliotherapy has been the method in the above-mentioned case, where the books and the values that they promote are carefully chosen by the state or its designated agents to promote good behaviours and conformity that it desires, one of the most nuanced usages is that of the 'prison radio'. This can be differentiated from the prisoner's radio, which are programs aired by radio stations outside that cater to requests and needs of the prisoners. They have been an avenue of communication between the 'inside' world of the prison behind the walls and the world 'outside', which also includes the prisoner's family and loved ones. 'Prison radio' is run and operated by the prisoners for the prisoners. It is proving to be an effective tool for controlling prisoner behaviour through a subtle imposition of state cultural values.

Due to the isolation and secrecy associated with prisons, there is hardly anay available research on prison radio. However, like the book clubs, the prison radio, it can be presumed, make the precariat voice operate within a close structure of state control and monitoring. It is an imposition of a culture borrowed from a different time – a time when the precariat did not exist – on the group. Of the many things that it does, it erases the formation of a precariat cultural identity, by creating a network for it to be divided into borrowed cultural terms. By giving a voice, it takes away a voice.

Can the Precariat Sing?

And yet, the precariat sings and finally gets a voice. Culture is both a passive reception and an active resistance. This survey will end by looking at one of the many ways in which the modern Indian precariat is expressing itself, which is through the medium of Indian rap music. A detailed semiotic analysis of rap music demands a completely different space. In this article, we will forego the musical discussion and confine ourselves to the lyrics. Since the groups that constitute the semiosphere of the precariat are multiple, it is futile to look for common and agreed-upon modes of expression that can define its cultural expression.

Standing has categorized the four A's- "anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation" as telltale signs of the precariat

psyche (Standing 2016, 19). The fact that this category has now consolidated as a class presupposes the fact that it has a distinct culture of its own. The next possible step is its cultural expression. The already existing art forms are redundant for this purpose because they have already been appropriated and hegemonized by the centre. In the Indian context, that lacuna has been filled by rap. It has entered the precariat semiosphere from outside. As an art form, rap owes its origin to the Bronx of 1970s where racially and economically disadvantaged young Black boys used this expression to document their protest against the systematized violence and discrimination faced by their community. Since then, rap has crossed over from the US and become one of the most popular musical genres worldwide. Akhila Shankar, associate director of brand and communications at Saavn said that analyzing the top 50 songs on the streaming app in July 2018, hip-hop is its third-biggest genre after Bollywood and electronic pop music (2018, n.pg.). This reveals a subtle intrusion of a form within a cultural space. It also shows how the young Indian precariat has owned it as its own form of expression. As a genre, rap in its thematic exploration is as various as the precariat is as a class. It deals with themes of unemployment, precarious employment, communal and racial marginalization, political and social decentralization, caste, aimlessness and isolation.

Dino James is a rapper from Bhopal. He takes his inspiration from his time as a struggler in Mumbai, where

all he could manage were bits and pieces jobs that he landed after hobnobbing around the film and modelling industry. He started writing his lyrics after returning to Bhopal. The fact that he has emerged as one of the most loved rappers among the present generation attests the fact that his lyrics have amply caught the voice of his generation. In a son significantly titled 'Loser', Dino raps:

"Yeh duniya ek sabse bade loser ki hai dastan
Usko tha vardanfatti rahegi
Aur hamesha rahega who pareshan
Struggle aur kangaali mein hi
Nikale gaus ka sara jeevan." (James 2016, n.pg.)

(This is the story of the greatest loser in the world, whose only blessing is his fear and anxiety. Restlessness is his constant companion. Ever a struggler, he knows not on whom to throw his anger. Translation mine)

The Indian overeducated, underpaid precariat is made to feel like a 'loser' because, in the neo-liberal society, self-worth has been equated with labour. This feeling of hopelessness and alienation is a regular trope in Indian rap.

The image of the defeated precariat is also visible in the works of the Mumbai rapper, MC Mawali, an alias which translates to 'loafer'.

> "Jyada darno jawan uterte jub sadak pe
> Har din ek score karte majbooran chor bunte
> Bhatke disha vo jaise ghumai galli ke raste
> Lagte nashe ke chaske, chakke wo khote hosh."
> (Mawali 2018, n.pg.)

(Most of the youth are out on the road. Out of desperation, scoring dope is his everyday work. Stealing is his everyday work. He wanders the street, aimless, senseless. Translation mine)

The increasing commoditization of education is another issue that Standing deals with while discussing constituencies of the precariat. This is coupled with the increased debt culture that goes hand in hand with the rentier economy conspiring with the neo global neoliberal economic orientation that is responsible for the growth of the precariat. The 2018 music video titled "Shaktimaan" released by the hip-hop duo Seedhe-Maut, features a young man who is repeatedly overworked and humiliated by his boss. The video ends with the young man helping two masked robbers steal from his boss. This clearly indicates that if the concerns of the precariat are not addressed, then they can be mobilized towards what Standing calls "a politics of inferno" (2016, 132). The isolation that the precariat feels is a result of the "seething resentment" that originates out of a lack of occupational identity.

"Kya hai tera naam, kya teri pehechaan hai?
…
Tujh jaise yaha dhool hai
Ye registaan hai!" (Maut 2018, n.pg.)

(What is your name and what is your identity? You are like a grain of sand and this is a desert)

Alienation is another feeling which Standing asserts to the precariat. In his isolation, the precariat feels adrift from public life and the apathy felt by him can be best expressed in the following lines by the Chennai rapper, Madara:

"Ayyash naujawaan mobile pe khelta taash hain
Twitter pe chillata kyun nahi hota yahan vikas.")
(Madara 2019, n.pg.)

(The lazy youth play cards in their cellphones, while complaining in twitter on the lack of development. Translation mine)

Madara attributes this inaction to the dual threat of internet and dead-end jobs. This view echoes Standing's postulation that the connectivity of the internet, which is a predominant feature of the precariat, paradoxically contributes to his isolation.

"…Aandolan mein shant, aur facebook mein shor
…Sadta kar gulaami jiski timing 9 se 5" (Madara 2019, n.pg)

(Shouting on Facebook but quiet on movements, rotting by slaving from 9 to 5. Translation mine)

Standing had asserted that the precariat "does not feel part of a solidaristic labour community" (2016, 12), and that was one of the reasons that it was yet to be a class-for-itself. He had also claimed that it is the youth who would have to take the lead in forging the identity of the precariat. The Indian precariat, through rap, is now ready to reclaim its identity.

Conclusion

Culture, as a class determinant, plays a liminal role. John Holden observes how culture is both a constraint and liberation (2010, 27). It is a mediation of a class with everything that defines it, and everything that goes into defining that definition, including all that, lies outside it. The threshold of the semiosphere defines the semiosphere. However, the dynamic nature of culture ensures that nothing is quite outside and nothing is inside except in a synchronic moment of consideration. Diachronically, the inside/outside binary is problematized, as what is 'outside' can be accommodated, redefining the semiosphere. Since the neoliberal economy has redefined social classes in a way that is different from everything that has preceded it, therefore it is imperative that culture formation will look for influences and create negotiations that were once considered well outside its purview.

The inclusion of those forms, through appropriation, are already taking place. The precariat, it is clear, is consolidating itself culturally, and it would not be far-fetched speculation that political resistance is in the offing unless a different political ethic intervenes.

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Migrant Routes and the Global South Novel

Gorica Majstorovic

One of the most complex dynamics structuring the contemporary world is the contradiction between the free movement of capital and the ever more restricted movement of people from the Global South[1]. Even as global connectedness and mobility continually increase in certain areas (information, technology, trade), national borders remain highly securitized and policed. The present essay focuses on migrant precariat at one such border site, Melilla, as seen primarily through the lens of two African novels: Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel's T*he Gurugu Pledge* (2017) and Marie NDiaye's *Three Strong Women* (2009). In these gripping narratives Ávila Laurel and

NDiaye remind the readers of imperial past by looking at the present in which migration and Spain's relationship with the European Union and Morocco are key issues. A vestige of the long and complicated history of colonialism in this region, which also closely implicates the French empire and Portuguese interventions, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla are Spanish outposts, "the nearest bit of Europe to all of them" (Ávila Laurel 2017, 163).

In Melilla, the eleven kilometers long border wall separates Spain from Morocco, Europe from Africa[2]. The border wall figures prominently, in the title (to which the 'pledge' in Ávila Laurel's *The Gurugu Pledge* refers to), and at the very end of both novels. They focus on precarious life at the informal migrant camp that is positioned on a Moroccan mountain overlooking Melilla and the Spanish/European border. In the present essay, my aim is to open up a space for critical reflection on questions surrounding precarity and marginalization within the neoliberalism and surveillance capitalism on the Melilla borderscape. I examine primarily *The Gurugu Pledge* and the third part of *Three Strong Women* while also focusing on certain scenes from the documentary films *The Land Between* (2014) and *Les Sauteurs* (Those Who Jump, 2016) as visual examples that recount a strikingly similar migrant experience[3]. By putting these narrative and visual texts into dialogue, I am interested in not only the transnational and postcolonial nature of their writing, but also, and more importantly, how they open lines of

interconnectivity through the channels of South-South dialogue, global solidarity, and resistance to post 9/11 neoliberal policies of surveillance.

The two Global South novels under analysis uncover the problem of (neo)colonialism, eliciting what Walter Mignolo identifies as the "subalternization of knowledge" (2012, 153)and what Debjani Ganguly describes as "the global state of war" and "maximalism of a human rights culture" (2016, 14). I use the term Global South in relation to the "novel" and to globalizing processes, to highlight its parallels but also to emphasize its "southern" difference and critical potential. While the term "global" (and ensuing "globalization") often refer to the flattening out of difference, the "Global South" does so by departing precisely from the fissures in the globalizing folds, its main thrust being the "de-linking" from globalization. In other words, it has been pointed out that not all "global" modalities (including the novel form), are preoccupied with colonialism and critique of (uneven) modernity from the position of (neo)coloniality, while, I would argue, "Global South novels" are intrinsically inseparable from histories of colonial domination, war, and continuous exploitation of indigenous resources. It is important in this regard to consider that the term "Global South" has been used in the post-Cold War era to replace the term "Third World" (and related terms such as "developing world" or "non-Western world"), to refer to a transnational and de/territorial way of con-

ceptualizing (post)colonial spaces that were negatively impacted first by colonial exploitation and later by neo-liberal globalization.

A dissident writer and a long-standing critic of the regime in Equatorial Guinea, Ávila Laurel lives between Malabo and Barcelona. He wrote *The Gurugu Pledge* in Spanish, under the original title of *El juramento de Gurugú*. However, the novel first appeared in English translation in 2017 and it was subsequently translated into French under the title *Sur Le Mont Gourougou*. In a striking parallel to its subject matter of migration, Ávila Laurel's novel has turned into a 'migrant text', one that is yet to find its 'home' in Spain, and one that has yet to be published in Spanish. Put differently, a parallelism may be discerned between the containment of the irregular migrant body and the tortuous route on which Avila Laurel's novel embarked in order to reach publication. My aim is to explore those precarious routes and the effects of dislocation and fragmentation, in both the narrative form of the novel and in its editorial trajectory.

Marie Ndiaye left France in 2007 in protest against the anti-immigrant policies of Nicholas Sarkozy's government and has since lived in Berlin. NDiaye's novel first appeared in French in 2009, under the title *Trois Femmes Puissantes*, and was subsequently translated into English in 2012 under the title *Three Strong Women*. While NDiaye's novel followed a more 'formal' publication

route, *The Gurugu Pledge* has turned into a migrant textual artifact out of necessity. Its publication, first in the UK, in English, where it won the PEN Translation Prize, makes us wonder about the conditions surrounding the indifference shown by the Spanish publishing houses, while it also unsettles the term "Global Hispanophone" (Campoy-Cubillo and Vizcaya 2019) to which it has been ascribed. By suggesting this, a question arises whether the 'global' in this newly coined term refers to works in translation and dissemination from the Hispanophone world? Or is the 'global', when paired with 'South" and "novel", as I will show using the methodology of the "Global South", also aimed towards global readership interested in south-to-south solidarity politics?

In order to address these questions, first, I will examine *The Gurugu Pledge* while focusing on bridging discussions of migration through the lens of the Global South. Second, I will address solidarity politics with migration located at the intersection of the Global South, Global Hispanophone, and Global Francophone. Overall, I will focus on convergences and divergences between these terms, but my primary focus, though, is on the question of Mediterranean and European borders, both as physical and symbolic constructs traversed by migration. I will inevitably engage with disciplinary borders as well, because the potential for this kind of academic shift ultimately challenges the enclosed and stagnant approaches to literary study, by calling into question reified, estab-

lished, and entrenched national literary fields while making us rethink the diasporic and wider political implications of these categories.

Pheng Cheah points out that the aim of Walter Mignolo's 'decolonial' thinking, and, I would add, the purpose of the Global South novel as a critical paradigm, is to contest a homogenous universalistic modernity by showing its structural connections to colonial violence. "The Reworlding of the World", Cheah argues, "remains a continuing project in light of the inequalities created by capitalist globalization and their tragic consequences for peoples and social groups in postcolonial space" (2011, 194). Global South is a term that in my reading of visual and literary discourse on migration suggests both a location/space from where practices are seen, interpreted and recognized, but also, and more importantly, a discursive position from which theories of globalization are exposed or denounced. I agree in this regard with Anne Garland Mahler's position that identifies the "Global South Atlantic" as "a conceptual apparatus that not only inherently recognizes the Black Atlantic foundations of the Global South but also calls contemporary solidarity politics into accountability to these intellectual roots" (2017, 100).

I argue that by following the Black Atlantic foundations of the Global South and by engaging the themes of migration, memory and transnational belonging, Global Hispanophone authors such as Juan Tomás Ávila Lau-

rel, Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, Trifonia Melibea Obono, and other Equatoguinean writers contribute to emerging channels of political and aesthetic solidarity across the globe and to what Nicholas Jones has termed the "Hispanic Black Atlantic"[4] (Jones 2018, 265). If, geographically and geopolitically, the term Global Hispanophone refers to works in Spanish produced in the former Spanish colonies beyond Latin America and the Caribbean (and the Melillan setting of the novel will fall within this categorization), the term Global South implies an entangled web of overlapping colonial histories and decolonial movements that inform the migrants' lives. In addition to other parts of the world (including Sub-Saharan Africa which is the area migrants are fleeing in *The Gurugu Pledge*), the term Global South also encompasses the following Global Hispanophone geographic areas: Hispanophone Africa (Equatorial Guinea, parts of Northern Morocco, Western Sahara), and Hispanophone Asia (The Philippines and the Mariana Islands).

The migrant narratives under discussion resort to fragmentation as they focus on a large group of Sub-Saharan migrants and refugees, of various nationalities, at a specific geopolitical location on the migrant route: the Spanish Moroccan border at Melilla. I argue that all authors under discussion here use interconnected African migrant stories not only to signal a distancing from the Western textual and visual archive but also to show the shared experiences of dehumanization and precar-

iousness at the gates of Europe. I read their narratives through the lens of fragment and rupture, and in doing so underline a poetic of dislocation that defines the migrant text and what T. J. Demos has called "the migrant image" (Demos 2013).
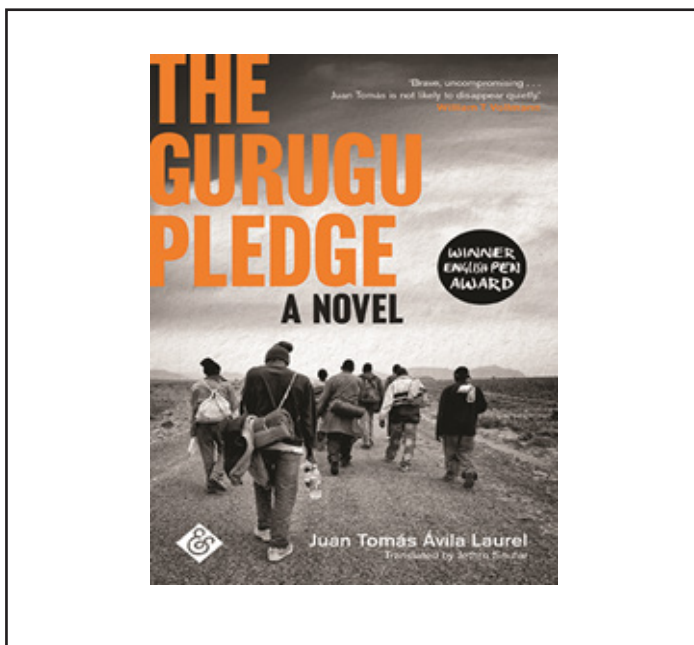
Figure 1, The Gurugu Pledge cover design by Edward Bettison, photo by Samuel Aranda.

The cover of Ávila Laurel's novel embodies the resistant imaginary of a migrant as a transnational political subject whose agency and mass mobilization shows not an anonymous victim but "traces of political subjects on the move" (Sanyal 2017, 28). Chosen by the publishing house And Other Stories, the book cover was designed by Edward Bettison. It contains a photograph by the Spanish photojournalist Samuel Aranda shot from the back, depicting a group of migrants walking. With only a bundle of personal possessions and carrying gallons of water, the migrants convey an urgency of displacement, while the photograph suggests a critical attitude towards image making and image consumption. Indeed, the cover of *The Gurugu Pledge* is purposefully dynamic: it shows an ongoing process and invites the reader to stand in and follow in the migrants' footsteps.

With regard to the question of transnational construction of the migrant text and heightened by the urgency of the theme of migration in contemporary world, it is particularly important to note that Ávila Laurel and Marie NDiaye write from the perspective of African migrants. *The Gurugu Pledge* is told entirely through their voices. I argue that Ávila Laurel and NDiaye offer a more historically and socially specific approach to migration that challenges the transnational neoliberal capital flows which presently condition migrant mobility as seen in the media. *The Gurugu Pledge* encompasses multiple fragmented stories at the Gurugu camp that were brought by

subjects affected by neoliberal globalization in Sub-Saharan Africa. While challenging the media accounts of migration, the novel presents the migrants' stories told by the campfire and describes their precarious life in the camp while they are waiting for an opportunity to scale the Melilla border fence.

The Gurugu Pledge begins with a clear reference to a place that dehumanizes: "We lived in the forest and cooked enough to still be standing. We gathered firewood and went down to Farkhana to buy fish, or to pretend to buy fish in the hope that some charitable soul would give us some" (Ávila Laurel 2017, 9). The narrative continues with an oral account by one of the migrant subjects, Peter Ngambo: "He had a beard from never shaving and he told us that in his village he'd been known as Ngambo. He said he'd once been a porter…Ngambo told us he never intended to leave his country, he'd only done so because his father had been discriminated against" (Ávila Laurel, 2017, 10).

The novel depicts different groups being allocated different caves in which to spend the night. Those proficient in multiple languages are placed on the top, in the upper part of this multilingual, Babelic mountain. They sleep on cardboard boxes or on dry leaves; if they are lucky, they sleep on blankets that were donated by the Spanish Red Cross. "That they had blankets at all was only thanks to the efficient efforts of a charity based in

a village in the foothills of the mountain, a village that was in fact more of a town, and which flew the Spanish flag, although it was in Morocco" (Ávila Laurel 2017, 45). The reference to the presence of the Spanish flag in this complex borderscape brings to mind not only the visual symbols of power but also the post/neo/ colonial framework.

A story told by a fellow migrant, Alex Babangida, is intercalated inside Peter Ngambo's narrative. Ávila Laurel said he drew inspiration for this particular storytelling style from the oral traditions of his native Equatorial Guinea[5]. For generations, storytelling has been a communal experience focused around audience participation. Indeed, in *The Gurugu Pledge*, Ávila Laurel uses storytelling and oral history as an attempt to challenge official accounts of migration. His novel is a poignant counternarrative that gives voice to those that are presented as voiceless. In other words, *The Gurugu Pledge* disrupts the message of 'who should be valued' in accounts of migration and encourages the reader to re-examine the assumptions made by the official state media when reporting a migrant story.

De-humanized and taken out of the historical context that propels migration, migrant narratives are usually discussed in the media in relation to debates about borders and citizenship. In *The Gurugu Pledge*, however, Ávila Laurel gives migrants an entirely different perspective

through a re-humanized voice that allows for their stories to be heard and for their community to be seen. In fact, the novel's narration is almost solely focused on the stories that migrants have brought with them, as their only luggage. Alex Babangida's story in *The Gurugu Pledge* is particularly poignant, because it centers around corruption and describes his experience while working on cleaning skins from illegal hunts in his native country.

Following the circular model of intercalated stories, into Alex Babangida's story is then inserted that of life in Uganda under Idi Amin, who "ushered in an era in which African civilians were obliged to leave their homeland and go and live elsewhere" (Ávila Laurel 2017, 46). In referencing a relatively recent dictatorship, and by examining news chronicles out of which these migrant narratives emerge, the reader is asked to think more deeply about the ways in which the imperatives of state violence and war subsume neo-colonial violence. To make legible the forcible encounters, removals and entanglements omitted in liberal accounts of migration, *The Gurugu Pledge* - as an example of Global South novel - invites to understand the processes through which the forgetting of violent encounters is naturalized or aestheticized in the media. The questions asked are not only "Why are they here?", as seen in the media, but also "How did they(we) get here and what are the (hi)stories that need to be heard and reflected upon"?

Everyone on the mountain came from a different part of Africa, "had a past like Peter Ngambo and a brilliant future that awaited them in Europe" (Ávila Laurel 2017, 25). The first time "Europe" is mentioned in the book, it is done with no small dose of irony because those gathered on the mountain, the reader soon finds out, have only the present and a meager chance of crossing over into the desired future . In Ávila Laurel's novel, irony functions as a critical tool: migrants are ironically called "the residents" (2017, 10). They are only temporarily gathered in the Gurugu Mountain camp, on the Moroccan side of the Mediterranean shore, in a liminal space. Indeed, the word "gurugu" is closely associated with the word "lilkhuruj", which means "to exit" in Arabic. However, "exit", in this context, entails another perilous crossing: going northward towards Europe means having to cross the Strait of Gibraltar. According to Mariangella Palladino, this puts migrants and their stories in dire straits: "As Europe is increasingly preoccupied with maintaining, patrolling, policing, militarizing, externalizing and re-drawing a border in the Mediterranean, this waterway is a divisive space" (2018, 75).

Empire and colonialism have left the divisive legacies of civil war, dictatorship, repression, and unrest throughout Africa. Aisha, the migrant featured in *The Land Between,* is a case in point. She arrived in Morocco with her four children fleeing the 2011 civil war in Ivory Coast. While describing how she lost her husband in the war, she re-

iterates "je n'ai pas le choix" ("I don't have a choice"), and recounts how she saw more than 300 Moroccan police officers and soldiers burning the migrants' camp. Les Sauteurs shows migrants returning to the camp following the fires caused by the police, and then cuts away to images taken by the official surveillance cameras while juxtaposing those with scenes filmed by the Malian migrant Abou. In *The Land Between* the Malian migrant Yacou reports: "Once you have entered Morocco, it's like you have entered a jail". (2014, min 14.37) The migrants are also aggressively pursued by the military who burn the camp, but they keep coming back and repeatedly attempt to scale the border fence *en masse*[6]. By using police recorded video surveillance footage, both films subsequently depict a group of migrants scaling the Melilla border fence. The footage from one of migrant's cell phones in *The Land Between* showed one person dying following the attempt.

Marie NDiaye's novel has a strikingly similar ending, also set on the Melilla border fence. Her *Three Strong Women* (2009) is the first novel written by a black woman to win the prestigious Prix Goncourt in France. The novel is written in three distinct parts that subtly interact and intersect. "The mobility theme is present in all three stories", Anna-Leena Toivanen notes, "and it is conceived in multidirectional terms between France and Senegal" (Toivanen 2015, 10). The Senegalese Khady Demba is the protagonist of the third part of the novel: this is

the part of the novel which most closely focuses on the migrant and precarious condition. What strikes the reader from the outset is Khady's struggle to preserve the memory of her dead husband and grandmother, the only two people who were kind to her prior to her journey. She embarks on the migrant route, and continuously struggles for the preservation of memory and identity. Forced by smugglers to change her name and get a fake passport, for example, Khady again relies on memory. As she travels by truck on the treacherous migrant route across the Sahara desert, she performs a remembrance of an ever-present past in order to sustain her strength and cultural identity.

Khady, in fact, was initially supposed to migrate by boat along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, following a plan imposed on her by her relatives. However, she ends up travelling by truck and is forced into prostitution in the desert town. Khady finally reaches coastal North Africa, "weeks later, in a forest the name of which she'd forgotten, among trees that were unfamiliar to her… the makeshift tent of plastic and foliage in which she was laying… The tent was part of a vast encampment of shacks or tarpaulins lofted on poles… Khady' noticed she had nothing anymore: no bundle, passport, or money" (NDiaye 2012, 287-289). She observed everyone in the camp making ladders. She, too, went in search of branches and started her work on building a ladder, "dredging up from memory a story she'd been told…

about a wire fence separating Africa from Europe" (NDiaye 2012, 289).

She went looking for food in a nearby town which closely resembles the one Avila Laurel describes in *The Gurugu Pledge.* Back on the mountain, Khady watched in terror as Moroccan soldiers were raiding the camp and pulling down the shacks. The assault of the border fence was finally announced, and Khady decided to join the group. She ran with others, climbed the fence with the help of the ladder she had built, and reached the top: "She kept telling herself never to stop climbing, never, repeating the words over and over again while no longer understanding them, then giving up, letting go, falling slowly backward, and thinking that the person of Khady Demba – less than a breath, scarcely a puff of air - was surely never to touch the ground, but would float eternal, priceless, too evanescent ever to be smashed in the cold, blinding glare of the floodlights" (NDiaye 2012, 292). As Toivanen points out, Khady "stands for an abject cosmopolitan in the eyes of "forteresse Europe" fighting to keep the unwanted African outside its borders (2015, 13).

The novel's postcolonial dynamic results in a necropolitical ending, underscoring the continuity, and problematic contiguity, of these spaces: the European EU border, on Africa's soil, and the Gurugu migrant camp, controlled by the Moroccan forestry police. Isabella Al-

exander has argued in this regard that "Morocco, in an attempt to capitalize on its strategic placement at the apex of trans-continental African migrations, and Spain, in an attempt to lessen the burden of more migrants and asylum seekers weighing on an already failing refugee and asylum system, are working in tandem to create a new class of migrants trapped on the periphery to the European Union" (2019, 153). According to Alexander, by forming such political agreements states manage control over migrant bodies before migrant bodies ever reach the confines of the state. This external border regime is a growing global trend, with EU and USA deferring their border control to neighboring countries such as Morocco and Mexico.

The Land Between and *Les Sauteurs* also deal with the immediate effects of the migrant reality of dislocation and fracture. Following Nora M. Alter, I approach each as an 'essay film' that presents the viewer the precarious daily life of migrants at the Gurugu. In fact, Ávila Laurel and the filmmakers do not portray coercive migration in terms of a "migrant flow", of a human mass that has been reduced to anonymity and indifference (as in the main-stream media), but rather, they highlight the individual and his/her migrant story. Indeed, Abou, the protagonist of *Les Sauteur*s, became an active subject of the film he was making. With regard to the political dimensions of their engagement with the postcolonial histories and contemporary realities of the Glob-

al South, Ávila Laurel's and NDiaye's novels, as well as the two 'essay films' set at the Gurugu Mountain camp, can therefore be placed alongside Warscapes magazine, whose literary retrospective, loosely titled "Visas", is an attempt to provide an understanding of the experience of migration through the lens of documentation and oppressive bureaucracy affecting human beings under involuntary mobility.

One day, the four-nations soccer tournament in *The Gurugu Pledge* is suspended, because an incident has occurred in one of the caves on the top. Two women were not well, one having suffered a miscarriage, the other having been assaulted. They were taken down to the village, in search of a doctor, on two men's backs. A captivating scene describing collective frustration is followed by another one depicting a group storming the barbwire border fence into Melilla. As advanced in the novel's title, hundreds of Gurugu migrants collectively pledged to climb the fence and set out to do so. The next morning, the two sick women were found on the top of the border fence where migrants had brought them in the hope that they would have been rescued and given medical help. Debarati Sanyal suggests, "that we currently witness a convergence between biopolitical theory and humanitarian reason", both of which "pivot upon figuring the refugee as 'bare life' – as an apolitical, speechless victim" (2017, 5). Both humanitarian and securitarian approaches, however opposed in intention according

to Sanyal's incisive reading, "envision the irregular migrant as a body to be saved, contained, policed, moved around, encamped, kept out, or expelled; in short, as a body to be managed" (2017, 5).

While the scene on top of the border fence illustrates this important point, a question posed at the beginning of Ávila Laurel's novel is equally vexing: "Why do African stories always have to have unhappy endings?" (2017, 39). In a manner of an epilogue that subverts this long history "of unhappy endings", *The Gurugu Pledge* ends with a first-person account of a narrator who doesn't jump the fence, but rather walks away from the camp, and abandons his quest to reach Europe . He goes instead to Gurugu Mountain's southern face, "to the side where the lights of nearby Europe do not reach" (Ávila Laurel, 2017, 182). The novel closes with the narrator's gaze turned towards the south of the African continent and the River Zambezi. It is rather significant that he identifies as "African", thus indicating that the novel's closing point is about wider alliances and solidarity networks being forged, not with the legacies of Europe but with Africa. This makes us realize that Ávila Laurel also seeks to establish an African literary identity, as he implies a move from the Global Hispanophone towards Africa and the larger Global South.

The subversive ending of *The Gurugu Pledge* (the character has his gaze on Africa, not Europe) points to the

limits of representation of migration while denouncing dictatorship and war as the globalizing enterprises in which migrants are forced to flee. Ávila Laurel also expressed in a recent interview for *Words Without Borders* that he has long been interested in the Equatoguinean reliance on Africa, and that he has written a novel (which remains unpublished) that focuses on a prosperous city built by migrants in the African desert. All of the African countries mentioned in *The Gurugu Pledge* (Mali, Benin, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Gambia) share a relatively recent European colonial past. Roger Bromley draws in this regard on Achille Mbembe's reflections on "the postcolony" and aptly asserts, in regard to Avila Laurel's *The Gurugu Pledge*, that, "the novel opens up spaces for their stories as ways of countering the epistemic violence of Empire" (2018, n.p.). Empire has left the legacy of not only continued economic exploitation, albeit through new means propelled by neoliberal extractivism, "which devastated the African continent and produced journeys which have culminated in the Gurugu" (Bromley 2018, n.p).

Following Hakim Abderrezak's Ex-Centric Migrations, I take the "burning the sea" metaphor (which in Arabic refers to clandestine crossings of the Mediterranean Sea, i.e. the "Mediterranean passage") as a metaphor representing the interlinking between empire and migration, in order to interrogate multiple nodal points within the current global poetics/politics of confinement, repa-

triation and (un)belonging. In sum, the post-migrant ending echoes Mbembe's conception of a borderless Africa, one that would subvert the carving of African boundaries along colonial lines, and of a borderless world. Mbembe has argued that "borderlessness" has been central to various utopian traditions[7]. He claims that "contemporary borders are in danger of becoming sites of reinforcement, reproduction and intensification of vulnerability for … the most racially marked, the ever more disposable, those that in the era of neoliberal abandonment have been paying the heaviest price for the most expansive period of prison construction in human history" (2018, n.p.). The post-migrant ending of *The Gurugu Pledge* points at the alternative futures and a centrifugal force that may potentially disentangle Africa from Europe while denouncing its history of empire and continuities reflected in current border regimes. The deeply disconcerting fragments through which migrant narratives are told require new critical insight into whose lives and which objects are transformed by profiting from global mobilities, militarized borders, the resource-centered and war-fueled global economy.

NOTES:

1. "The Global South refers both to a post-Cold War cartographic conception that embraces Africa, Latin America, Asia, including parts of the Middle East and the Pacific Islands; and politico-cultural spaces shaped by global histories of capitalism, empire, race and diaspora. In this regard, the American South, the Caribbean, the border zones of Latino/Latina Study and immigrant communities of European nations and cities are as much part of the Global South as are Nigeria and Argentina". http://as.virginia.edu/global-south

2. "Located on the Northern Coast of Morocco, Melilla is an autonomous Spanish City, a European enclave on the Continent of Africa. The two continents are separated by a barrier built and funded by Spain and European Union, who also pay Morocco to control the border areas and regulate migration" (*The Land Between*, min 1).

3. In 2014, Australian filmmaker David Fedele produced The Land Between. In 2016, Moritz Siberth and Estephan Wagner made another Melilla-focused documentary film, also from the perspective of migrants. They handed a camera to Abou Bakar Sidibé, a Malian migrant at the Gurugu camp, who is credited as a co-director, co-author of the voice-over, and director of photography in *Les Sauteurs*.

4. See Michelle Murray's "The African Dreams of Migration" in Symposium. Nicholas R. Jones devised the term "Hispanic Black Atlantic" "as a critical tool and a discursive geographical space to rethink and revisit Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic model" (Jones, 2018, 265).

5. Ávila Laurel mentions this in an interview filmed during the Madrid Book Fair, "Tomás Ávila Laurel firma en la Feria del Libro de Madrid, en el Retiro" (2009): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g5etVuSpV0

6. In *The Land Between*, Yacou makes the distinction that "not all the Moroccans make us suffer. It's the authorities" (2014, min 29.52).

7. See Achille Mbembe's "The Idea of a Borderless World" in *Africa is a Country*.

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The Ethical Re(turn) in Postcolonial Fiction: Narrating the Precariat in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West *and Mohammad Hanif's* Red Birds

Paul Veyret

In 2019, according to the United Nations Migration Report, the number of international migrants across the world reached 272 million people or 3.3% of the world's population. The global refugee population accounted for 25.9 million people while the number of "internally displaced persons due to violence and conflicts reached 41.3 million" (IOM Report 2020 4-5). Although these figures make no distinction between the different circumstances of migration, the twenty-first century is an age of displacement, forced relocation and border crossing. Migrants and refugees are the new precarious

proletariat of globalization. The concept of 'precariat' has gained currency first in social sciences, and more recently as a new prism of interpretation in postcolonial studies. Guy Standing has delineated "a class-in-the-making" consisting of "a multitude of insecure people, living bits-and-pieces lives, in and out of short-term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development, including […]migrants in their hundreds of millions around the world." (Standing, 2011b). Precariat, a portmanteau word of "precarity" and "proletariat", appeals not only to sociology but can also be used in literary criticism as it holds two opposite poles of tension. Primarily, the precariat is a mode of existence, a socioeconomic definition with shifting borders in the midst of a fluctuating world. It also defines a political identity with its own culture, organization, political representation, and demands. The representation of the precariat demands an ethical response to create awareness, and postcolonial authors are rising to the challenge. The connection between ethics – the deployment of a universal set of moral values (OED) – and postcolonial literature is quite fundamental and growing awareness of multiple forms of precarity have added renewed dimensions of exploration and interpretation within the realms of postcolonial studies.

The ethical turn in postcolonial studies concerns "issues of how humans live and what they live for" (Schwartz, 3). Indeed, "texts demand ethical responses from their

readers in part because saying always has an ethical dimension and because we are our values, and we never take a moral holiday from our values." (ibid, 5) The new subalterns, who are assigned a place and a status on the margins of states or who are forcibly displaced by war, famine or natural disasters, are at the heart of two novels by Pakistani writers Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif, *Exit West* (2017) and *Red Birds* (2018) respectively. Both novels propose singular responses to the refugee and migrant crisis by combining political commentary and engagement with the norms of realistic representation. According to the editors of *The Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, the study of "forced displacement and forced settlement" (15) goes beyond the field of human rights and sociology and is connected with politics, ecology, and literature. Moreover, as the Mediterranean has become a graveyard for unmourned migrants, writers turn to ethics and literature to put the limelight on the anonymous people who "have been declared ungrievable." (Kràl, 2) The ethical answers provided by the novels under scrutiny are, in the case of *Exit West*, a fable on the arbitrary nature of borders, while *Red Birds* is a political satire about Middle Eastern refugees in the context of the 'war on terror'.

Philosophers have also written on the precarious lives of displaced populations and their conflicted relations with the West. Judith Butler's *Frames of War* (2009) is subtitled *When is Life Grievable?* and a chapter is entitled "Precar-

ious Life, Grievable Life". Like *Precarious Life* (2006), it deals with the aftermath of 9/11 and the way Western liberalism – Butler means U. S. foreign policy and its Manichean worldview – has downplayed the suffering of "collateral" war victims who are assigned to a blind spot of public opinion. The question of the "grievability" of people's lives, and more specifically of Middle Eastern, Muslim refugees, is at the heart of *Red Birds*. Both novels are part of a wider ethical undertaking to theorize and represent the figures of the migrant. Migrants' identities are often products of a legal discourse characterized by a permanent tension between the preservation of human rights and the state policies safeguarding national borders (Agier, Madeira 2017 9). Legally, the status oscillates between an economic definition – migrants are displaced populations in search of a better life– and a more political one which is contained by the term refugee[1]. *Exit West* and *Red Birds* represent attempts to apprehend the migrant crisis and the consequences of the war on terror on the civilian populations through the prism of highly aesthetic fictional forms, and not by relying on actual legal definitions and population data. In fact, while *Exit West* and *Red Birds* are politically and ethically committed novels about the socio-economic category of the precariat, narrating precariousness draws attention both to the representation of the precariat as a category, and also to the self-reflexive nature of language. As we shall see, the figure of the migrant is the founding metaphor of the novel, and Thomas Nail's theories provide a use-

ful tool of interpretation for *Exit West*, while Butler's reflections on grievability and precariousness will find connections with *Red Birds*.

The ethical concern with social and political precarity in the novels is shared by other Pakistani novelists, who likewise favour a modernist attention to experimentation with form. Like other anglophone Pakistani novelists, Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif focus on the aftermath of geopolitical upheavals affecting global Muslim populations, underlying their precariousness in the face of state violence. Within a short period, the 'war on terror' in the Af/Pak zone and the resurgence of homegrown jihadism in the UK, have formed the backdrop of a number of novels by Pakistani authors. Nadeem Aslam's *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) and *The Golden Legend* (2017), Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire* (2017) offer strongly aesthetic answers to the fate of a marginalized population. Similarly, Mohsin Hamid's and Mohammed Hanif's fiction focuses on the plight of marginal and vulnerable characters. Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) describe the gradual disenfranchisement and marginalization of its main characters, respectively Daru, a Lahore mid-level banker who is expelled from the city's wealthiest circles and retraces his downward spiral in a wry confession, and Changez, an upwardly mobile Pakistani trader in a New York firm who finds himself victimised by racial labelling after 9/11. *How to*

Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia (2013) uses the same trope of precarity to describe, in the guise of a satirical self-help book, the rise and fall of a South Asian entrepreneur in the bottled water business. Mohammed Hanif's novels share the same attention to precarious characters. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) is a hybrid text which is by turns a political thriller on General Zia-ul-Haq's death in a plane crash in 1988, a spy mystery with gothic undertones, a political satire on the dictator's bigotry and a revenge tragedy including a blind woman, a cursed crow and a case of mangoes. The political farce is present in *Our Lady of Alice Bhati* (2011) which depicts the mishaps of a 'Choora' (Christian) nurse, part of one of Pakistan's most precarious communities. The vulnerable lives described in these novels share a common approach: the representation of precariousness has moral and ethical obligations that call for the readers' engagement. In the two novels the represented voices are meant to be "unique", "narratable selves", which demand from the readers "an act of attention that registers the uniqueness of the other's narrative"(Couldry 2010, 8, 13).

As a postcolonial novelist, Hamid is the cultural interpreter of the global precariat, while at the time, keeping this rather unstable role at a distance: *Exit West* is thus the result of a shift from mimetic representation, to the expression of an aesthetically constructed experience. The representation of migrant precariat in the novel is the result of a linguistic, literary experience based on difference and metaphors. *Exit West* finds echoes of Thomas

Nail's *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015b) in its description of a world in constant flux and where borders are magically abolished, replaced by supernatural black doors linking the global south with the global north. Indeed, we can perceive a connection between Guy Standing's 'precariat', Judith Butler's 'precariousness' and 'grievability' with Thomas Nail's definition of the historically expelled groups from society:

> the nomad, the barbarian, the vagabond, and the proletariat are four figures of the migrant. Each emerges under different historical and social conditions of expansion and expulsion, but each also invents a form of kinetic power of its own that poses an alternative to social expulsion. Although each figure of the migrant deploys this force in a unique way, each is also the social expression of a more general "pedetic" social force. (Nail 2015b, 123)

Exit West is about transforming the precarity of migrant lives into a utopia of displacement. It is an allegorical fiction about the abolition of borders and nation-states. Paradoxically, when it comes to the topography of migration, *Exit West* and *Red Birds* perform unlabelling and anonymization. At the same time, they never become completely culturally and politically opaque. The paper will explore how the precarious lives are represented in each novel and how each novel situates itself in connection with contemporary times and geopolitical ruptures. Narrating precariousness in order to ethically engage

with the reader needs distance from a mimetic representation of reality and produce texts which test the density of literature and the arbitrary nature of signs.

Mohsin Hamid, like Mohammed Hanif, connects writing with ethical and political commitment in order to represent the fractured lives of migrants and refugees. Hamid explained the political dimension of the novel -– "Yes I'm pro-migrant." (Hamid 2017) – and the writer's necessary engagement with contemporary issues:

> I understand that people are afraid of migrants. If you're in a wealthy country, it's understandable that you might fear the arrival of lots of people from far away. But that fear is like racism: it's understandable, but it needs to be countered, diminished, resisted. People are going to move in vast numbers in the coming decades and centuries. Sea levels will rise, weather patterns will change, and billions will move. We need to figure out how to build a vision for this coming reality that isn't a disaster, that is humane and even inspiring. (Hamid 2016)

The future of migration is therefore to be found in a utopian tension that reconciles the fears of "nativists" with the expectations of the newly arrived forced migrants. *Exit West* is structured around two almost symmetrical parts: the first part describes an anonymous Middle Eastern city "teetering on the edge of the abyss" (Hamid 2018, 1) then collapsing when religious "mili-

tants" take over the whole country, impose religious law, reminiscent of the Taliban and ISIS, and terrorize the inhabitants. Black doors appear at random throughout the city, but also throughout the global South. Some are guarded by the army or by militants, making the passage even more haphazard. Migrants emerge mysteriously on the other side in private homes or dark back alleys in the wealthier, urban North. But in *Exit West*, kinopolitics – defined by Thomas Nail as 'the politics of movement' (Nail 2015b 2) – is a universal force: inhabitants from the global north can also travel through the doors and settle in the south. For Hamid, the 'pedetic forces' of migration are not reserved to one social or ethnic group, it is a centrifugal force which favours mobility over settlement, universalism over ethnic and cultural idiosyncrasies. In a reversal of coordinates, time transforms migration into a universal given, a symptom of our very human condition. As one of the many aphorisms of the novel states: "we are all migrants through time" (Hamid 2018, 209). The second part of the novel turns into a utopian fiction on migrancy when not only the two protagonists, Saeed and Nadia have escaped through the dark doors, but "the whole planet was on the move […] as much of the global south headed to the global north" (Hamid 2018, 167). The doors avoid the realistic description of long and dangerous journeys because the point of arrival is more important than the passage West.

Indeed, the appearance of doors is never explained, save as escape routes out of the horror of reality: the doors

are metaphors made literal in an otherwise mimetic novel as they bring together two adjacent territories. Hamid presents the black doors as "rumours", normal doors becoming "special doors" which connect two distant places:

> [a]ll their doors remained simple doors, on/off switches in the flow between two adjacent places, binarily either open or closed, but each of their doors, regarded thus with a twinge of irrational possibility, became partially animate as well, an object with a subtle power to mock the desires of those who desired to go far away, whispering silently from its door frame that such dreams were the dreams of fools. (Hamid 2018, 70)

Furthermore, whereas the place of origin is never named – yet easily recognized as generically Islamic and Middle Eastern – the places of arrival are always carefully identified: whether it is "the Sydney neighbourhood of Surry Hills" (Hamid 2018, 5)[2], "the Tokyo district of Shinjuku" (Hamid 2018, 25), "the San Diego locality of La Jolla" (Hamid 2018, 45), "Jumeirah Beach Residence" in Dubai (Hamid 2018, 86), "the Greek island of Mykonos" (Hamid 2018, 100), "Vienna" (Hamid 2018, 101), "Kensington, Chelsea", "Kentish Town" (Hamid 2018, 126), "Palace Gardens Terrace" (Hamid 2018, 136), "Vicarage Gate" (Hamid 2018, 148), "the hills above Tijuana" (Hamid 2018, 156), "Prinsengracht in Amsterdam" (Hamid 2018, 172), and finally "the new

city of Marin, on the Pacific Coast, close to San Francisco" (Hamid 2018, 189). Hamid chose to leave out the specific name of Saeed and Nadia's point of departure: it could be Lahore, Raqqa, or Bagdad. Country names are also left out – except for Nigeria (Hamid 2018, 144). On the other hand, neighbourhoods and city names are mentioned: scale matters, and by avoiding the wider, political denominations of states, Hamid narrowed the scope of the point of view to a more human, immediate, and almost neighbourly experience. Identities are local and global, national identities are problematic. In other words, migration in *Exit West* is exclusively pedetic: thanks to the black doors, migrants are literally within walking distance of radically different worlds and cultures. Saeed and Nadia reach three successive places: Mykonos, London, and Marin County. Each corresponds to a different aspect of Nail's kinopolitics.

The first place is a liminal location: Mykonos, like Ikaria and other Aegean islands, is a well-known hotspot for migrants and refugees as it stands close enough to Turkey, half-way between Asia and Europe. It is also a famous tourist destination, and the ironic overlapping of the two forms of displacement is underlined by the description of the beach. First, Saeed and Nadia emerge from the black door near a "beach club […] its signs […] written in English but also in other European tongues". Their first human contact with the island is "a pale-skinned man with light brown hair [who] came out and

told them to move along making shooing gestures with his hands, but without any hostility or rudeness, more as though he was conversing in an international pidgin dialect of sign language". As they walk away, they see "in the lee of a hill […] what looked like a refugee camp, with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colours and hues – many colours and hues but mostly falling within a band of brown that ranged from dark chocolate to milky tea – […] speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world […]." (Hamid 2018, 99-100). In Hamid's description the migrants form a global disenfranchised precariat: they are expelled from known social and political territories – the ironic beach club standing here for an outpost of Western civilization. Moreover, the "cacophony" Nadia and Saeed – or the narrator – perceive are yet another sign of the migrants' absence of unity. The vision might correspond to what Nail describes as the result of "external expansion by expulsion" (2015b, 17) when the centrifugal power of the state expels marginal groups from its borders, and when "political kinopower produces barbarian migrants." (2015b, 17) But as Nail also outlines in his study, the different figures of the migrant undergo the opposite dynamics of centripetal forces, in a constant oscillation (2015b, 137) between expulsion and confinement.

Perhaps the most magical part of the novel is not so much the black doors but the dramatic moment when migrants submerge London, and when the government

accepts their presence, thereby ushering an era of co-habitation between the newcomers and the "natives". Although fragmented and limited in time and space, centripetal forces dominate as new forms of micro-societies emerge. In an era of rising nationalisms, with progressive values on the wane everywhere around the globe, with leaders of the free world erecting walls and reinforcing existing barriers, Mohsin Hamid's words sound here like magic realism: "Perhaps [the natives and their governments] had grasped that the doors could not be closed, and they had understood that the denial of coexistence would have required one party to cease to exist […] Or perhaps the sheer number of places where there were now doors had made it useless to fight in any one." (Hamid 2018, 164) London, as the second stage of Nadia and Saeed's peregrinations, is also a significant location. The city is strongly associated with a tradition of cosmopolitanism. While apparently universalist and humanist, in fact, this political philosophy carefully established modes of control and exclusion. In other words, "republican cosmopolitanism" (Nail 2015a) meant that states and government bodies could define "the right to leave a territory as a human right, but not the right to enter a territory". On the contrary, "migrant cosmopolitanism" is based on new dynamic forces based on solidarity and a decentred form of self-government leading to empowerment. Significantly, new transnational and multilingual solidarities emerge in London, as a counter-power to the established government. But as new

land developments emerge around London, "the London Halo" (Hamid 2018, 167), and as migrants and natives work side by side, they still live "under an invisible network of surveillance" Hamid 2018, (188) and are part of a disenfranchised precariat. The third and last place Saeed and Nadia reach through the supernatural black doors is Marin County, "on the edge of a continent" (Hamid 2018, 193), the last American frontier.

Mohsin Hamid delineates in the antepenultimate chapter of the novel a summary of the history of the United States- without naming the country - through the prism of violent kinopolitcs and by describing the changing figure of the migrant. For the narrator, there are three layers of nativeness. The first layer is made up of the dwindling number of actual Native Americans, "these people having died out or been exterminated long ago" (Hamid 2018, 195). The second layer of nativeness is made up of people who claim "they or their parents or their grandparents had been born on the strip of land that stretched from the mid-northern Pacific to the mid-northern Atlantic" and whose "existence here did not owe anything to a physical migration that had occurred in their lifetime." (Hamid 2018, 196) The "third layer of nativeness" is the most violent: "those who thought directly descended […] from the human beings who had been brought from Africa to this continent centuries ago as slaves" (Hamid 2018, 197). By reintroducing a kinetic dimension to American history,

Hamid not only places the figure of the migrant at the heart of its national narrative, but it also puts into perspective the precariousness of the different figures of the exploited proletarian groups. The peregrinations of Saeed and Nadia end in a loop, or rather two loops as they part ways in Marin, before returning to their point of departure "half a century later " (Hamid 2018, 227) and meeting again. Hamid's narrative shifts the migrant's trajectory from a spatial to a temporal plane, as the novel bifurcates towards utopia and post-history. Like Nail's theory, in Hamid's novel the hybrid, oscillating figure of the migrant becomes the central metaphor, reversing the question of border-crossing from a state issue to a personal, subjective, almost magical experience, thus engaging with the reader's ethics.

In contrast with the optimistic utopia about the possibility of precarious existence to find a point of equilibrium, Mohammed Hanif offers a darker vision of the present, marked by disappearance and haunted by death. The two incipits, one verse from sixteenth-century Punjabi Sufi poet Mahdo Lal Hussain, and part of the last words pronounced in public by human rights activist Sabeen Mahmud, point at the two poles of tension present in the text. The first quotation, "And when I look through it, it's red", is from an oft-quoted figure of traditional Punjabi Sufi poetry who, like Bulleh Shah, excelled in the traditional Kafi form of poetry, part of the qawwali repertoire. Shah Hussain saw Sufism as a

mode of emancipation from and rebellion against the norms of religion and society. This remark points to the main trope of the novel – and perhaps a theme central to Hanif's writing – the transience of life and political disappearance[3]. But the quotes also point to the possibility of transgression and resistance: Shah Hussain apparently added his lover's first name, Mahdo, to his own, thus somewhat transgressing the social norms of the period, while Sabeen Mahmud, the founder of Karachi's T2F café, was a household name among Pakistan's "liberal, urban, globalized civil society"[4]. The quotations point to the two aesthetic and moral poles of the novel, equidistant between an inclination towards Sufi mysticism, a poetic and magic representation of reality on the one hand, and on the other, an inclination towards political commitment. Hanif recalls the circumstances when he started writing his third novel: "While I was writing it I lost people very, very close to me, just randomly. First, my best friend, then my second-best friend, then Sabeen – all in a row in, like, 15 months."(McHugh 2020).It appears that writing is for Hanif a refuge from loss, and *Red Birds* is perhaps an attempt to reconnect the living and the dead.

Like Hamid's novel, places and people are unlabelled and anonymized in *Red Birds*, and everything conspires at resisting interpretation, presenting instead shifting, precarious identities and places. The novel is a chamber opera for three main voices[5]: Major Ellie, an American

fighter pilot stranded in the desert, Momo, a refugee, denizen of the very camp Ellie was meant to bomb, and Mutt, a philosopher dog "who can excrete gold and spout Rumi" (Hanif 2018, 137) and probably a distant relative of Orhan Pamuk's narrator dog in *My Name is Red* (2004). Each of them voices an ironic and sarcastic vision of the consequences of the war on terror and complement each other, forming a polyphonic satire. Ellie speaks like Yossarian, the main protagonist from Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and deconstructs the metanarrative of the war on terror as a cultural war. Space is divided into three places: "the Desert", "the Camp" and "the Hangar": while the first two are generic places, the Hangar appears to be an abandoned U. S. Air Force outpost from which missions were flown into enemy territory. Language, like the political motivations and the help provided by American aid agencies, sounds hollow and seems to have exhausted its possibility of expression. Ironically, Mutt is the most articulate and clear-sighted among all the characters.

At the heart of the novel's absurdist satire is a missing character, Bro Ali, Momo's elder sibling, whose role was to pinpoint enemy positions to the American forces. In order to cover his identity as a spy in the eyes of the community, Bro Ali's own family was bombed out and has to live the life of refugees. Ellie puts into question the syllogism of bombing precarious civilian populations then sending "humanitarian aid [...] a plane load

of rations, lots of footballs and candy" (Hanif 2018, 90).The logic of war is summarized by its circular logic: "We used to have art for art's sake; now we have war for the sake of war." (Hanif 2018, 32), without forgetting that "war has been condensed to carpet-bombing followed by dry rations and craft classes for the refugees" (Hanif 2018, 32). The paradoxical absurdity of war is wryly described by Ellie as not only a morally sanctioned aggression against those "planning to bring down western civilization" (Hanif 2018, 93), but also as an attempt to comply with ethical standards. As an obvious dig at Western opinion taking the moral high ground on the war, and perhaps also wryly mocking the west's more liberal sensitivities and political commitments, Hanif satirizes the incongruous "ethical turn" taken by the war. Major Ellie received a series of classes – inaugurated by "Desert Survival Level 6B" (Hanif 2018, 10) – dictated by a cultural studies agenda that tries to understand the "other's" cultural identity. The capitalized words underline the hollowness of the concepts: "Cultural Sensitivity course" (Hanif 2018, 5) or "Cultural Sensitivity 101" (Hanif 2018, 32), "'Moral Enigma, Moral Wars'[…] 'How to Conquer Yourself Before You Conquer Your Enemy'" (Hanif 2018, 12), "Cultural Sensitivity Towards Tribals" (Hanif 2018, 60) or "How To Defend American Values Without Offending Their Own" (Hanif 2018, 88) all tend towards the description of a morally dubious and biased perception of the Muslim Other. The accumulation of such absurd course and seminar

titles underlines the absurdity of the war and the fake moral conundrums it entails. Language, in the emphatic beckoning of its capital letters, utterly fails at describing reality.

The description of space condenses the flawed logic of the war. The three capitalised places, the Desert, the Camp, and the Hangar point at shifting coordinates on an imaginary map. For Major Ellie's superior "There's a Hangar, and there is a Camp" and with the aid of "a pointer" […][i]n a world of uncertainty, if you can nail them down on a paper map the enemy's existence becomes much more real" (Hanif 2018, 7). On the contrary, once on the ground, what Ellie sees is the utter discrepancy between the narrative of war (and US AID) and the precarious reality of the life of refugees. The description of the Camp evokes Zygmunt Bauman's description of refugee camps as both enclaves where "wasted lives" are assigned and a place outside the limits of human life. For Bauman refugee camps are "hors du nomos – outside law as such" (2004, 76) and the "inmates are stripped of their identities except one: that of the placeless, functionless refugees." (2004, 76). Indeed, "refugees are human waste […]; from their place, the dumping site, there is no return and no road forward […]. Nothing is left but the walls, the barbed wire, the controlled gates, the armed guards […], inside that place, they are forgotten." (2004, 77-78). Bauman continues, borrowing religious imagery which can also illuminate

Red Birds: "Roads back to the lost […] homely paradise have been all but cut, and all exits from the purgatory of the camp lead to hell…" (2004, 79). What Major Ellie describes echoes Bauman's words:

> The top of the gate has something written on it […] USAID FUGEE CAMP. The RE seems to have dislodged itself out of embarrassment. I have never seen a refugee camp for real, only in pictures and TV news. I expect rows of tents, gleaming ambulances, people standing in orderly queues waiting to get their rations from gap-year students with dreadlocks and nose rings. What I see I have already seen on my Strike Eagle's monitor, just before I hesitated to press the button: a series of junkyards, rows of burnt-out cars piled on each other, abandoned tanks and armoured vehicles, a small mountain of disused keyboards and mobile phone shells, piles of rubbish with smoke rising off them.
> The camp is a sea of corrugated blue plastic roofs, stretching like a low, filthy sky, broken by piles of grey plastic poles and overflowing blue plastic bins. (Hanif 2018, 91-92)

The camp's description embodies the refugees' precarious existence. The name itself is erased as it literally falls to pieces. A place of waste and disruption, absurdity and paradox, the camp embodies the refugees' precariousness. The connection between the signifier, USAID REFUGEE CAMP, and the signified, the place

of relegation for an internally displaced population, is dislocated, creating a rift within the logic of language. Moreover, Ellie's gaze changes and this awareness modifies his focal point: instead of seeing the camp mediated through Western television coverage or the technological weaponized gaze of his jet, Ellie encounters a different, ground-level reality. The description of the "FUGEE CAMP" can be read as an attempt to appeal to the reader's attention, beyond the text's self-conscious textuality. Indeed, perhaps framing the character's sarcastic gaze, we can maybe recognize the author's gaze, or at least a represented author's gaze, reminding us of our indifferent vision of the "true", unmediated realities of war. Beyond the failure of signs, the failure of our ethics of precariousness is suggested. The territory where the refugees are assigned is both a zone of relegation and a wasteland of exhausted signifiers. As Major Ellie remarks: "When you see something shiny in the desert […] most likely it's something useless like a mirage, or a mirage of something that's useless, like a wrecked plane." (Hanif 2018, 9) In *Red Birds*, everything is a sham and a parody, and reality itself has become elusive.

Red Birds constantly oscillates between two types of movement: the first one follows the circular trajectories of the characters lost in the no man's land of the camp. The generically labelled Desert, Camp, and Hangar are the coordinates of a triangular territory from which no one can escape. The other trajectory is suggested by

the skyward flight of the red birds that "emerge from the sands and take flight" (Hanif 2018, 62) or "shoot up from the sand" (Hanif 2018, 80) and disappear. Or downward, like the crash of Major Ellie's F 15. Place in *Red Birds* is a limbo where characters mull over the same obsessions: home, flight combat briefings, becoming a multimillionaire overnight, bones, or a disastrous encounter with an electric pole. They are caught in the vicious circle of repetition and claustrophobia. Everything in the text conspires against a transcendental, symbolic interpretation outside the novel. As Hanif explains:

> *Red Birds* seems symbolic, especially in its settings like Hangar and the Camp. The situation is surreal at times... At the centre of the novel is a house destroyed and a missing brother. I don't think there is anything symbolic there. Sometimes we look for symbols when there are none. Sometimes we wish there were symbols instead of bombs, or missing boys were allegories for something, but they are not. I am sure we have all had a glimpse of a refugee camp or an abandoned army base. Yes, ordinary life can be surreal at times. (Aslam, 2018)

The novel indeed navigates between symbolism and mimetically anchored realism and keeps pointing to the precariousness of its language: hence, as Mutt the philosopher dog muses, "A bone is not a metaphor. An electric pole doesn't symbolize phallic fantasies, it's a public convenience, and as I learnt to my cost, a brain-damaging

hazard" (Hanif 2018, 84). While Mutt expounds, very ironically, his literalist, one-dimensional interpretation of language, he also explains that "red birds are real[…] when someone dies in a raid or a shooting or when someone's throat is slit, their last drop of blood transforms into a tiny red bird and flies away." (Hanif 2018, 84) Thanks to Mutt's acute sense of smell we discover that Major Ellie, who also saw a bird a few days after crashing in the desert (Hanif 2018, 34), is a ghost because he is "the man with no smell" (Hanif 2018, 117). Eventually, the Hangar, "which looks like an abandoned shopping mall" (Hanif 2018, 231), turns out to be a place where ghosts gather: "they are dead but they don't know it" (Hanif 2018, 231-232). The mimetic reality of the novel seems to dissolve into a supernatural story as it appears that Ellie has been a ghost since he saw the first "red blur" (Hanif 2018, 34) fluttering in the distance through his binoculars. The last pages of *Red Birds* transform the novel into a funeral elegy as Major Ellie, Bro Ali, and apparently the other characters, step into the territory of the spectral. The eruption of ghosts towards the end of the novel points to the ethical nature of loss and mourning. The realization of Major Ellie's spectral nature is not about the novel shifting into Gothic mode, it is rather more of a conceit which changes a metaphor into a literal image: the pilot and the refugees he was supposed to bomb become the "grievable" figures of a vulnerable, precarious world. Reality itself is precarious and porous as it dissolves into spectrality.

Exit West and *Red Birds* explore the possibility of representing the contemporary figures of the precariat and the experience of precariousness. Mohsin Hamid and Mohammed Hanif chose to approach the issue of asylum seekers and refugees using the mode of allegorical and speculative fiction, rather than a more testimonial, realistic description of migration and life in U.N. camps. An allegory, by nature, does not designate fixed points of interpretation but, on the contrary, contains its own precariousness and hermeneutic vulnerability: "As every critic who has attempted a definition is forced to acknowledge, the nature of allegorical writing is elusive, its surface by turns mimetic and anti-mimetic, its procedures intricate and at times seemingly inconsistent, and its meaning or "other" sense – how it is encoded, or what it refers to extrinsically – often indeterminate." (Copeland and Struck, 2, 2010). The paradox of these novels is the tension between the ethical response elicited by the subject matter and the aesthetically distanced rendition of the precarious figures of the migrant. The ambiguity of its allegories remains open: the metaphors of the red birds in Hanif's novel and the black doors in Hamid's book are both manifest and equivocal: precarious.

Significantly, the last pages of *Red Birds* are saturated with religious references: the litany of the ninety-names of Allah is mentioned, but so is the Christ-like apparition of a crucified Brother Ali: "His arms spread out […]

strung up in mid-air" (Hanif 2018, 275). Furthermore, the Hangar could be interpreted as Purgatory, taking the text's mainly Sufi frame of reference in an unexpected direction. The whole novel, with its topographical vagueness, could also be read as Purgatory, or some form of afterlife. Similarly, *Exit West* oscillates between a realistic world picture and a form of distanced magic realism. Hamid captures the technological zeitgeist of the twenty-first century as he describes the smartphones and social networks which supplement human connections. He also describes futuristic, animal-like machinery and machines of surveillance. Thus, a digging machine is compared to "a wolf spider or praying mantis" (Hamid 2018, 180) and a drone, "part of a swarm, no longer than a hummingbird" (Hamid 2018, 210) crashes at Saeed's feet and he decides to give it a proper burial. The precarious border between animate beings and machines narrows and Hamid's novel could be read as a post-human "meta-allegory" (White 2019). Its textuality not only points at its indeterminacy but also stages the condition of its interpretation "in the face of an increasingly uncertain global space" (White 2019, 14). What Hamid and Hanif probably wish to achieve by placing their novels in a culturally distanced, unlabelled space is to open up their work to a global audience. By avoiding a specific topographic and onomastic Pakistani or Middle Eastern context, which would hinder a transparent reading of the world, Hamid and Hanif write their novels as "relational spheres" (Bourriaud 2002 43) which can accommodate a global readership.

Mohsin Hamid is aware of his ambivalent position as a global best-selling author "marketing" (Huggan 2001) a form of exoticism for Western audiences, both creating "dissensus" (Brauer 2019) and also conforming to the demands of the transnational market economy. *Exit West* is now a household name: it appeared on Barack Obama's Summer 2018 reading list. The novel is also set to be adapted as a television series for Netflix by the Russo brothers and produced by the Obamas[6]. Although, in a way, as a postcolonial writer Mohsin Hamid is "marketing" the precariat, his aesthetic choices point toward a form of hermeneutical resistance which challenges the readers, thus achieving a form of ethical gesture. Mohammed Hanif, as a multilingual journalist – Hanif writes regular columns and op-eds in English, Urdu, and Punjabi – and anglophone novelist also stands as a cultural translator between the precariat of refugees and a Western audience. Both novelists occupy ethical positions, making the experience of silenced and invisible populations "narratable". The two novels relate to a global reading, primarily those familiar with satire and who might not be put off by the presence of distanced magical realist elements. The ultimate aim is to ethically draw this reading public into a diegetic universe marked by differences: the precarious world of migrants and refugees, but also one marked by aesthetic differences. The combination of the two dimensions, political and aesthetic, closes the gap between the two worlds so that the precariat and global readers can share the common ground of postcolonial ethical fiction.

NOTES:

1. UNCHR definitions are available at: https://www.un-hcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-view-point-refugee-migrant-right.html

2. Claire Chambers points at an incoherence in Hamid's description of the Sydney neighbourhood as white and privileged whereas, in fact, it's a rundown neighbourhood next to Sydney's Railway Station frequented by drug addicts. (Chambers 2019 n.19)

3. Significantly, one of Mohammed Hanif's work is an inquest and collection of testimonies on political violence and state repression in Balochistan: The Baloch Who Is Not Missing & Others Who Are. Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2013.

4. Saad Shafqat, "Profile: Sabeen Mahmud': Striving for Better." Dawn. 18 September 2008. See also: "Director T2F Sabeen Mahmud shot dead in Karachi", Dawn, 24 April 2015; "Sabeen Mahmud", Dawn, April 5, 2018.

5. I use the operatic image deliberately since Mohammed is the author with Mohammad Fairouz, of an opera on Benazir Bhutto. Sources: "Opera on Benazir Bhutto's life set to premiere in US", *Global Village Space*. 28 November 2018. https://www.globalvillagespace.com/opera-on-benazir-bhuttos-life-set-to-premiere-in-us/; "Opera show based on late Benazir Bhutto's life to open

in USA next". *Something Haute.* November 28, 2018. https://www.somethinghaute.com/opera-show-bhutto-based-on-late-benazir-bhuttos-life-to-open-in-usa-next-year/. He is also the author of two radio plays, *What Now, Now That We Are Dead?* (2007) and *The Dictator's Wife* (2008).

6. Barack Obama's reading list is widely published every year. One reference among many: Tyler Coates, "Barack Obama Reminded Us What It's Like To Have a President Who Reads". *Esquire.* 18 August 2018. https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/g22776537/barack-obama-summer-reading-list-2018/. For the Netflix project information is already available on the IMDB platform: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7255366/

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Borders and Postimperial Melancholia in the Works of Mohsin Hamid and Raja Shehadeh

Samar H. Aljahdali

> My hope is that I'll succeed in imaginatively recreating the region as it existed at the time of the Ottoman Empire, when the land was undivided. (Raja Shehadeh 49)

> The doors to richer destinations were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places, were mostly left unsecured, perhaps in the hope that people would go back to where they came from. (Mohsin Hamid 101)

> The post imperial is not a rival to the postcolonial but its comrade. Postcolonial literary studies, until now dominated by the aftermaths of European, especially British and French, colonialism, needs to address the question of comparative imperialisms beyond the European. The toppling or challenging of authoritarian regimes and struggles for democracy in nations formerly colonized, ostensibly postcolonial but in fact un- evenly and incompletely de- and neo-colonized, does not mean that 'postcolonialism' as a field of study has ended, but that the very question of empires, colonies, and nation-states is entering a new phase of investigation, and, indeed, of political hope. Not all empires were the same; nor were their legacies. (Donna Landry 127)

Responding to voices claiming the death of the postcolonial, Donna Landry finds in the postimperial a useful way of reviving and rerouting the field of postcolonial enquiry to address comparative imperialisms beyond the European frame. Her article, "The Ottoman Imaginary of Evliya Celebi: From Postcolonial to Postimperial Rifts in Time" (2015) marks an intervention into the intersections of the demise of Empires and the nostalgic return, discursive and otherwise, to imperial control in a postcolonial world of nation-states that is "incompletely de- and neo- colonized" (Landry 127). Despite lack of criticism on the postimperial as a theoretical comrade of the postcolonial, Landry conceives of the term as

a conceptual frame for negotiating the multiplicity and diversity of empires and their legacies. This paper contributes to debates over the relation of the imperial past to the colonial present, negotiating alternative models of imperial control and dominance; namely the Ottoman and the Euro-American, as represented in Raja Shehadeh's *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle* (2010) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) respectively.

The introductory quotes to this paper highlight the relevance of the selected narratives to engage with the dialectics of the imperial and postcolonial in relation to border making and border control. The Palestinian writer, Raja Shehadeh revisits his uncle's travel narrative to recover the borderless world of the Ottoman Empire at a time when the land that was once undivided has been extremely fragmented by settler colonialism. With surrealistic overtones, however, Mohsin Hamid sketches an imaginary travel to the future to anticipate fissures in borders and a migration apocalypse, as well as a Western nostalgic return to racial consciousness and imperial control. In this context, the paper investigates conceptualizations of border in relation to what Paul Gilroy (2005) defines as "postimperial melancholia" (90). The 'post' in the term suggests a distinction from an earlier phase of 'imperial melancholia' as Gilroy explains: "An older, more dignified sadness that was born in the nineteenth century should be sharply distinguished from the guilt-ridden loathing and depression that have come to

characterize Britain's xenophobic responses to strangers who have intruded on it more recently" (90). According to Gilroy, the inability of a nation, made by war and victory, to face the loss of the empire, along with its reluctance to deal with that unsettling history, feeds into the more recent resonance of discourses representing postcolonial migrants to the center and asylum-seekers as "unwanted alien intruders without any historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects" (90). Gilroy cites the example of Mathew Arnold's articulate melancholy as a representation of the country's dignified sense of its imperial civilizational responsibilities and relation to classical empires in contrast to more recent racist and nationalist responses by populists to Commonwealth immigration during the 1950s and 1960s (91). For Landry, the 'postimperial' signifies a historical and conceptual distance from the imperial, articulating a mode of thought set in a context following the demise of Empires and at the same time a detachment from its ideological bearings. However, as Caroline Rooney and Kaori Nagai contend in their introduction to Kipling and Beyond, it is not always easy to distinguish between imperial and postimperial melancholia; a melancholia that fails to mourn the loss of Empire will fail to attain a postimperial mode and remain in the imperial mode (8).

What Gilroy emphasizes as "Britain's xenophobic responses to strangers", characterizing postimperial melancholia is clearly related to border making (Gilroy 90).

Recently, border studies have paid attention to the dialogics of border and mobility, conceptualizing borderlines and the power politics that determines border making and border permeability. This paper brings together two different yet timely reflections on borders and mobility: namely Raja Shehadeh's *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle* (2010) and Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017). The two narratives deal with postcolonial global borders in complementary fashion, invoking the past and the future respectively to grapple with the complex present.

The paper offers an exploration of the shift from imperial polity to postcolonial legacies, and the rise of nostalgic postimperial melancholia. The word 'imperialism', as defined by Robert Young, has been used to denote two meanings:

> it originally constituted a description of a political system of actual conquest and occupation, but increasingly from the beginning of the twentieth century it came to be used in its Marxist sense of a general system of economic domination [...]. When people originally used the term 'imperialism' to describe a political system of domination in the first sense, it did not necessarily carry critical connotations; its later use to denote the new broader meaning of economic domination, by contrast, always implies a critical perspective. This shift really registers changing global attitudes to imperialism itself. (Young 2012, 32)

The adjective 'imperial' came to be commonly used in reference to an expansionist mode of control over space, accommodating different lands and different groups of people. This accommodation of diversity is a key element in the imperial paradigm that sets it apart from the postcolonial model, which celebrates nationalism and national solidarity. As opposed to this postcolonial frame of reference, a nostalgic return to a lost imperial world with its spatial expansionism and multiethnic polity has emerged as an alternative model to European postcolonial legacies of rival nationalisms and bordered nation-states.

Bringing together Raja Shehadeh's recounts of his Ottoman uncle with the travel narrative of the Ottoman writer, Evliya Çelebi, Donna Landry has foregrounded a "rift in time" towards "an historical opening up of the past," in search for an alternative and more cosmopolitan model than offered by European colonialism (141). This study builds on Landry's understanding of the 'rifts in time' (127) to intervene discourses of border making and border permeability in relation to postimperial consciousness. By bringing together Shehadeh and Hamid, I will use Landry's postimperial paradigm to negotiate borders within the contexts of Ottoman imperialism and European colonialism, sketching ways of how a postimperial perspective might offer a critical positioning to the functioning of borders within postcoloniality.

Shehadeh's narrative offers material for border conceptualization within the emergent geopolitics of settler colonialism in the particular Middle Eastern context. Hamid, however, foreshadows a future return to bordering in the face of mass migration from (post)colonial peripheries to the center. The imagined worlds inscribed by Shehadeh and Hamid neatly capture the ways of travelling through time and space, speculating the past and anticipating the future respectively, for possible alternatives for the tribulations of a bordered present.

Emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of border studies, David Newman urges scholars to develop reinventions of traditional concepts of borders in the light of contemporary temporal and geopolitical forms (2003, 13). This concern is shared by Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly who has sketched a history of ideas on borders and contributed to the development of a model of border studies, bringing together tools and 'variables' from different disciplines, including geography, history, economy, anthropology, political science, psychology among other social sciences (Brunet-Jailly, 2005, 633). Contributing to a renaissance of border studies, Newman investigates the complex nature of borders as both lines of separation and opportunities of connection (2006, 150). He argues that the function of the border is to perpetuate difference and maintain order between 'our' compartment and that of the 'other' (Newman, 2003,15). Highlighting the "protection function" of the process of bordering, Newman defines borders as "institutions," as opposed

to simply lines of demarcation, with their internal rules that govern mobility among other forms of border behavior (2003, 14).

Borders are not immune to the hegemonic hierarchy that has separated the world, and eliminated its "structures of welcoming" (Derrida 2002, 361). With that logic, Gloria Anzaldua defines the border, as "a dividing line, a narrow strip, a long a steep edge," made "to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them" (Anzaldua,1987, 3). She emphasizes the artificiality of borders, and the power politics underling their production and functioning. For her, "a borderland is a vague and undermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldua, 1987, 3). Ambivalence, unrest, and tension characterize the borderland, while death is always an unwelcome but familiar resident.

In a later study, Newman has revisited "the lines that continue to separate us," shifting focus to border crossing as forms of resistance (2006, 3). The very lines designed to maintain the self/other binaries mare susceptible to the need for cultural interaction in that liminal space. With particular focus on her experience in the US/Mexico borderland, Gloria Anzaldua has examined the processes of interaction between cultures across the divide. For her, the processes that the border personality usually undergoes contribute to the decolonization of the "*mestiza* consciousness" (Anzaldua 1987, 80). Ac-

cording to Anzaldua, the hybridity of the mestizo liberates him, albeit partially, from the limiting monologism of postcolonial nationalist vigour.

Writing her own experience, Anzaldua showcases the relation between border and narrative. Being a poet and fiction writer, Anzaldua powerfully and usefully implements poetry in her book, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2004), in which Spanish and English verses intervene and interact telling of walks along the barbed wire and describing ocean waves "gashing a hole under the border fence," while another scene features Mexican boys running after a soccer ball, "entering the US," signaling the vulnerability of the border to human and non-human penetration (2004, 2). In her poetry, the Mexico/US border is a "1,950 mile-long open wound," "running down the length of [her] body, staking fence rods in [her] flesh" (Anzaldua, 2004, 2). Literary writing and story telling have been instrumental as medium of voicing the border and borderland experience. For Newman, they are useful materials to better understand the diverse and intricate perceptions of borders:

> One way to have a deeper understanding of boundary perceptions is to focus on border narratives and the way in which borders are represented through a variety of images, ranging from the real life landscapes and practices, to literature, media, art, maps, stamps, lyrics etc. The notion of difference, of the walls that separate, figure prominently in all of these popular representations (2003, 20).

Sharing this concern for border narratives, Sharon Novarro has explored the interaction of narrative and the identity formation of the border community, arguing that their story telling, testimonies, and life stories are replete with power politics and counter hegemonic discourses (2003, 129-130). This paper contributes to the instrumentality of narratives in promoting deeper understanding of bordering within (post)colonial contexts.

Beyond the physicality of borders, Henk Van Houtum has investigated the centrality of a power/knowledge dialogic in their making, whilst simultaneously showcasing their dehumanizing effect on landscape. Negotiating abstractions of border, Houtum contends that due to their action related conception, borders are verbs that continue to make and/or are made, thus suggesting the verb "bordering" as a more useful lexicon (2011, 51). In other words, they are constructs, limiting and more often constraining mobility. However, the conception of border has developed interpretations inclusive of connectivity and inclusion beyond what Houtum describes as "a narcissian centripetal orientation" of the border (2011, 50). He cites the example of the door as becoming both a border and a passage, promising further connectivity. Houtum further develops his conception of the border as a "fabricated truth" or a construction of knowledge, serving the power politics of the territory; whereby "the practice of border making, of bordering, confirms and maintains a space, a locus, and focus of control" (2011,

51). Critical of the practice of bordering, Houtum emphasizes the resulting dehumanization of the landscape.

Borders are both protection walls and thresholds; highly connected to the geopolitics of place. According to Houtum, "a socially constructed border is a form and manifestation of self-repression. It suppresses the total potential of personal mobility and freedom by constructing a sphere of trust inside and a fear for what is out there, beyond the self-defined border" (2011, 59). Self/other relation helps understand what Houtum refers to as the "Janus face of the border," with one side facing the inside whilst the other watching the unfamiliarity of what lies beyond the border (2011, 58).

The unfamiliarity linked to the border experience, with its associated fear, limits, and more often than not, constrains connectivity and mobility. Central to Donna Landry's argument on the need for the postcolonial to open up and address the question of comparative imperialisms (Landry 2015, 127) is the right to move and the possibility of connectivity permitted by the imperial model. Emphasizing the assumption that "not all empires were the same; nor their legacies," Landry invites postcolonial studies to investigate alternative imperial formations to the European colonial model, with particular focus on the issue of bordering (2015, 127). The work of the Ottoman traveler, Evliya Çelebi (1611-1685), according to Landry, offers a representation of the Ottoman imperial formation, with its *millet* system,

as exemplary of a cosmopolitan model based on religious tolerance and a powerful symbiosis of multi-ethnic groups, with a high measure of free movement across a vast Ottoman landscape.

Read contrapuntally, the narratives of Shehadeh and Hamid offer ways to understand the current issues of movement, migration, and colonial control by reflecting on comparative paradigms of Empire. While Shehadeh returns to the past to invoke an imperial system borderless and hospitable of ethnic multiplicity, Hamid warns of a future resurgence of an imperial impulse that continues to operate beyond the historical demise of Western Empires. In both contexts, the immigrant, who struggles for the right to return to his native land as well as the right to move freely in the host land, is the target of the postimperial melancholia. For Gilroy, failure to accept the loss of the imperial domination of the past has reproduced in the present an imperial impulse towards immigrants (102-103). This imperial impulse creates invisible borders unreceptive of immigrants and against the ethical responsibility towards refugees. This imperial impulse creates invisible borders unreceptive of immigrants and against the ethical responsibility towards refugees.

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) offers an exploration of border making in the postcolonial world, dealing with global issues of displacement and mass migration. The

narrative tells the story of Saeed and Nadia who fall in love in an unidentified city in the middle of a civil war. To escape the chaos and threatening conditions of the city, the couple travelled westward to Greece, England and the US. The novel suggests a timely response to massive migrations to Western shores by groups of non-Westerners from postcolonial peripheries, unsettled by internal and external threats. While the author's native city of Lahore resonates in the representation of the unidentified city, there seems to be more indirect associations to the Arab cities of Aleppo and Mosul, which have been shattered by extremists, violence and civil wars. While featuring global migration and displacement, the narrative simultaneously interrogates the authority to build borders, the right to move, and the forced direction of border crossing.

Exit West redefines borders across a diverse set of divides, including racial, Marxist and colonial power politics. The passage to the Euro-American hemisphere is entangled with jeopardizing rites. Escaping the poverty, death, and loss that ravished havoc in their native city, Saeed and Nadia decide to cross one of the rectangular black doors that appear suddenly in the vicinity. To exit west does not always guarantee a boarding pass to a peaceful land and successful future. More often that not, it is the gateway to apocalypse, burning all ties and disconnecting the migrants from their past, family, and culture. Nadia and Saeed, upon emerging in Mykonos, were relegated to a limited space in the periphery, and

"had never been to the old town, for it was off limits to migrants" (Hamid 2017,113). Each of the two migrants has taken a different path in dealing with the unfamiliarity of the host environment. Saeed a conformist, retreats to the less privileged group that shares some commonalities in terms of skin color and economic deprivation, while Nadia, a non-conformist, seems to find more security in aggregating herself with the dominant group. For Nadia, denouncing Muslim and Eastern codes mitigates her imprisonment and facilitates her mobility across ethnic and racial divides. The narrative tells of the enormous crushing pain of leaving one's homeland, bringing sorrow and mourning to the fore of the migrant's story.

The construction of these imaginary doors echoes the surrealism of chaos that led to massive migrations and universal mobility. These "doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away" (Hamid 2017, 69) have been described by international media coverage as "a major global crisis" (83). When the characters step through one of these, they emerge in a different locale. For example, Nadia and Saeed step through a door in their unidentified city and emerge first in a Greek island, then in London and later in California. Approaching the door of their first journey, they have been "struck by its darkness, its opacity, the way that it did not reveal what was on the other side, and also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end" (98). The door becomes a powerful symbol con-

necting the local to the global. More importantly, they function as a useful technique to compress the journey and allow the novel to focus on the experience of migration and the limits imposed on movement rather than the moment of border crossing.

In border narratives, the effect of imperial dominance is showcased in the control of the center over the political and geographical borders. In Hamid's Exit West, however, the emergent magical doors represent the collapse of concrete borders whilst simultaneously maintaining the invisible border of racial consciousness: "Without warning people began to rush out of the camp […] a new door out had been found, a door to Germany" (107). The emergence of the doors provides a means of escape and mobility to the periphery, whereas to the center these doors seem to threaten imperial power. Hamid's narrative emphasizes that the dissolving of political borders will not necessarily dissolve the racial boundaries upon which Western empires have been built. The migrants' relative freedom to roam in Western locales is received with rage and disapproval from 'nativists' who support the government rejection of migrants. For Hamid, mass migration is far beyond the powerful control of the West: "the doors could not be closed, and new doors would continue to open, […] and the denial of coexistence would have required one party to cease to exist" (164). The description of the doors in *Exit West* in relation to fissures in bordering can be understood in

terms of the dual backward-looking and forward-looking dialectics of postcolonial existence. These doors are both beginnings and ends; featuring the historical end of colonialism and the beginning of neo-colonial ideologies and practices; the collapse of empire and the continued effect of imperial hegemony.

In *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle* (2010), Raja Shehadeh's postimperial melancholia of the Ottoman times expresses a position against settler colonialism. While both Hamid and Shehadeh negotiate forced migration and displacement, the undefined parameters of Exit West are contrasted with Shehadeh's clearly demarcated space/time. Shehadeh inscribes his reenactment of the travels of his great-great Ottoman uncle, Najib Nassar, highlighting radical changes, particularly the limits on mobility imposed by the Israeli settler colonization of Palestine. Najib, a lawyer by education, was the founder of *Al-Karmil*, a weekly newspaper, which voiced out his warnings of European colonial interests in the land; a position that made him travel from 1915 to 1917 to escape arrest by the Ottoman government. Following the footsteps of his uncle's journey through what was known as Greater Syria along the Great Rift Valley, Shehadeh's narrative includes a clear and direct note of the author's purpose: an imaginative restitution of what was once an undivided land: "My hope is that I'll succeed in imaginatively recreating the region as it existed at the time of the Ottoman Empire, when the

land was undivided" (Shehadeh 2010, 49). Shehadeh's account can be read as a political nostalgic return to the time of Ottoman imperial expansionism over the land and a reproduction, albeit discursively, of the joy of a borderless geography.

For Shehadeh, the reimagining of his great uncle's travels links borderlessness with forms of resistance. This reflective nostalgia of a time when "the land was undivided" by borders, roadblocks, checkpoints, and barbed wires articulates resistance of the invisibility enforced upon Palestinians by bordering (Shehadeh 2010, 49). Borders make other groups and landscapes invisible to viewers across the divide. "Unlike Najib," observes Shehadeh, "I cannot look from this high cliff and see myself beyond the present borders. My field of vision stops at the Golan Heights, at the border between Israel and Syria" (Shehadeh 2010, 35). Defying what Gary Fields defines as "enclosure landscapes," often effected by means of "cartographical," "legal," and "architectural" instruments, Shehadeh, at the turn of the twentieth century and despite a rift in time, re-inscribes a borderless imperial geography in danger of forgetfulness (Fields 2011, 183). Through this reenactment of Najib's route along the Rift Valley, Shehadeh resists confinement and invisibility by exploring the Rift Valley from geographically dispersed vantage points including Mount Arbel, the Belvoir fortress, the Jordan Valley, and the Biqa in Lebanon. What remains for Shehadeh from his great uncle's

extended walks is the view from Mount Arbel, one of the highest points in the plateau of Galilee, which offers both a way of looking and a position of enunciation into the bordered and the inaccessible.

Shehadeh's project has not been without failures. There are occasions when his uncle's route became inaccessible and impossible to walk through, requiring constant re-routing. Imagining the route to visit A'yn Anoub, Najib's village in the Lebanese mountains, Shehadeh laments:

> I'll first have to travel east to Jordan in order to go north-west to Lebanon. They didn't have to cross any border, while I have to cross three. Before the First World War, when Najib lived in the area, the whole region was under Ottoman rule. The entire stretch of the Rift Valley, from the Taurus Mountains in the north all the way down to the tip of the Hijaz, modern-day Saudi Arabia, was under one regime. Najib might have had other problems to contend with, but they did not include the fragmentation of the land and the tormenting restrictions on movement that plague my life and the lives of most Palestinians, many Arabs, and to a lesser extent Israeli Jews in the Middle East. (2010, 35)

The quote articulates a palimpsest of two historical moments that can be defined within imperial/settler colonial paradigms. The present settler colonial condition is unfavorably compared to the imperial past. Shehadeh's

postimperial melancholia offers both a political commentary on the tribulations of the colonial present and a nostalgic recollection of imperial borderlessness. In contrast to a borderless Ottoman Empire, border making is the legacy of both a European colonization of the region, and the ongoing Israeli settler colonialism.

While Shehadeh's concern was on the physicality and harsh concreteness of borders both inside the settler colony and along its geographical borders with the outside world, Hamid shifts focus to the invisible borders of postcolonial geography, unveiling their reconfiguration as sites of closure and control. The doors in Exit West are highly symbolic, signifying a convergence of politics and economy. Saeed notes that "the doors to richer destinations, were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places, were mostly left unsecured, perhaps in the hope that people would go back to where they came from" (Hamid 2017, 101). Mobility across borders from poor to rich locales is restricted and more often prevented, whilst movement in the opposite direction is often facilitated. The "rich countries" respond to this "unprecedented flow of migrants" with more "walls" and "fences" built to strengthen their borders (Hamid 2017, 71).

Concomitant to the discourse of border security, *Exit West* redefines signs, commonly known to signify openness and accessibility. In that unidentified city, windows

are reconfigured in relation to the instability caused by the civil war. Instead of opening opportunities to connect with the outer world, the window has come to be realized as "the border through which death was possibly most likely to come" (Hamid 2017, 68). Amidst turmoil, these windows open room for death and destruction, urging people to seal them with bookshelves. In Hamid's representation, doors and windows perform fissures in imperial control and the functioning of its borders, allowing infiltration and instant transportation of refugees.

In the particular context of Palestine, as Shehadeh notes, border making has taken many forms including the redefining of natural waterways as military borders. The River Jordan is a significant case in point. The River has a unique history of functioning as a frontier, hosting fights for survival and human dignity. The battle of Yarmouk and Karama are two examples. In 1921, the River Jordan was first marked as a border by British colonial authority, separating Jordan from the Palestinian lands under British Mandate. It has further been manipulated by Israeli settler colonialism to function as a border, separating setters' dominions from native locales. In June 1967, the River Jordan became a political border, further pushing the 1948 lines, and demarcating Israel from what has come to be known as the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Standing on which side of the River can now define your identity

and political affiliation. This geopolitical manipulation of the River signifies what Houtum has described as the dehumanization of landscape by bordering, a familiar practice in a settler colonial paradigm.

But this was not the case under Ottoman imperialism. "For the first sixteen years of my life," laments Shehadeh, "the River Jordan was not a border" (2010, 56). In his description of the River and its openness, Shehadeh has engaged with its historical and religious legacies along its geographical signification. Commenting on its hospitable nature, Shehadeh points to the smaller waterways that flow peacefully into the River, whose banks have never been attached to a single major city. However, its fluidity and changeability implicate tendencies towards resisting rigidity and sustaining diversity. The 'baptismal site' on the River Jordan signifies rebirth and rejuvenation (Shehadeh 2010, 57). Always receiving travellers, border crossers through the Allenby Bridge, and the religious rituals, the River Jordan had long defied colonial division by its cosmopolitan legacy.

However, Shehadeh's postimperial imaginary intervenes the present scene to reveal the divisions and restricted mobility inflicted upon the land and its native inhabitants by settler colonialism. He reflects how the River Jordan had long been a site of reconnection and celebration:

> It took a number of years to internalize the new geography. The river where we used to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany and had had our picnics had become a lonely border river made inaccessible on either side by mines and barbed wire, a river that could only be glimpsed when there was a bend in the road as we drove along the heavily guarded border that it now marked. (Shehadeh 2010, 61)

What has long been shimmering with the lights of celebration, the smell of food, and the music of dancing crowds, has now sunk into deep silence and unfamiliar absence. After being announced a military border, the once lively River Jordan has diminished into a "lonely" military border (Shehadeh 61). Throughout the book, Shehadeh's description emphasizes the loneliness of the River, which has now been deserted by both settlers and natives.

The River Jordan, however, resists being relegated to a "lonely" border, and continues to serve as a palimpsest of the multi-cultural history of the land (Shehadeh 61). Now an ethnic divide, the River Jordan, marked by its shifting courses, resists a static and fixed route. While inscribing the history of a settler colony, "the river of the desert," to use Shehadeh's description, articulates a form of resistance (Shehadeh 2010, 56). Being both an ethnic border and a form of resistance reveals only one side of a site loaded with contrasts and ambivalence. The River of baptism and rebirth flows into the Dead Sea, where

it faces "the terrible ordeal of death by osmosis in water so high in concentrations of salt" (Shehadeh 2010, 56). At this site, notes Shehadeh, incongruent opposites such as fresh and salt water, life and death, come to a striking proximity (Shehadeh 2010, 56). Shehadeh notes, however, how the local name of the River bears witness to its functioning as a path of connectivity over religious bonds. The River is also known as "Al Shari'a al Kubra," signifying meanings of the great path and faith (Shehadeh 2010, 56). Unlike the Nile or Euphrates, the River Jordan has resisted being limited to one civilization, indicating its openness to humanity. The ambivalent representation of the River Jordan in the book further complicates colonial conceptions of border making, as borders often deconstruct the function for which they are constructed.

Shehadeh represents the Rift Valley as a signifier in danger of losing its signified. During the Ottoman Empire, the Rift Valley has long been defined by its connectivity of what was known as Greater Syria. However, the dividing legacy of the British Empire and the settler colonial geopolitics has put these meanings to risk. The Valley comes to bear witness to man-made bordering whilst naturally maintaining its connectivity as it "starts north in Syrian plains, through Lake Qaraoun in Lebanon and down to the Dead Sea and Lake Tiberias" (Shehadeh 2010, 53). With little hope, Shehadeh expresses prospects of "travel through this valley, imagining it as it had once been, all one unit, undivided by present-day

borders" (Shehadeh 2010, 54). The decline of Ottoman imperialism, followed by British domination and the present Israeli settler colonization of the land has created rifts in time, geography, memory and literary representations between Najib's and Shehadeh's chronotopes.

Not only the Rift Valley, but also the Allenby Bridge has lost its signified meaning. The bridge, built across the River Jordan to connect the lands of Palestine and Jordan, now becomes a highly secured border. While his great-great Ottoman uncle was able to cross the River on horseback with no conditioning regulations on his right to move, Shehadeh expresses his fear at the sight of a long line of vehicles halted along the road.

> During that historic June week the pressures of vehicles and people crossing to the east bank using the already bombed out Allenby Bridge was so heavy that the bridge collapsed and fell in to the river. Those fleeing had to walk across the crumbling remains that were half buried in the fast-running water. The crushed bridge symbolized the severing of ties between the two banks of the rouge river. (Shehadeh 2010, 60)

Destroyed bridges break all possibilities for connectivity and mobility. A river and a bridge, one natural, one man-made, uncommonly put further limits on Palestinian movement.

Settler colonialism features a mode of bordering uncommon to imperial and colonial paradigms. Under the guise of Western discourses of ecology and nature conservation, some areas in the colony are designated as nature reserves with limited accessibility. Through the historicization of conservation ideals and practices in the African context, Jaidev Singh and Henk Van Houtum challenge the visionary rhetoric of conservation and reveal the politics that manipulate the enclosure and control of resource rich regions (2002, 255-257). While exploring the boundary making aspects of conservation in a settler colonial context, Shehadeh's telling of the reenactment of his uncle's travels reveals the othering and bordering processes inherent in the emergent geopolitics of conservation. Shehadeh's plan to walk through Wadi al Bira, following in Najib's steps has been thwarted by the conversion of the village to a nature reserve with marked walking trails. This representation of Wadi al Bira contributes to our understanding of the environmental geopolitics that relates to border making. In this Palestinian context, the two frameworks of political ecology and settler colonialism have mediated the designation of nature reserves and (b)ordering of Arab localities.

Shehadeh is voluntarily oblivious to what he describes as man-made borders, as his walks sketch ways to restitute a lost freedom whilst simultaneously effecting a political commentary on comparative imperialisms. Fanon

emphasized the compartmentalizing scheme of colonial worlds and the increasing immobility imposed by these internal borders:

A world divided into compartments, a motionless, Manichaeistic world […] this is the colonial world. The native is being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments, of the colonial world. The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. (Fanon 1967, 40)

Compared to the exclusionist model of European colonialism, according to Najib's pronounced position, the Ottoman imperial formation presents "a multi-ethnic system that never attempted to colonize the land" (Shehadeh 2010, 21).

Against global concern for bordering, Hamid negotiates the universality and inevitability of migration and mobility. The Old Lady from Aalo Alto is a good case in point. Although she has never moved from her house, she has been subject to migration. Her neighborhood has changed beyond recognition to an extent that her vicinity has become unfamiliar to her as if she has moved to a new place. When she opened her door and went out, "it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives […] We are all migrants through time"

(Hamid 2017, 209). Reflecting on mass migration as a defining aspect of the modern postcolonial world, the omniscient narrator comments:

> That summer it seemed to Saeed and Nadia that the whole planet was on the move, much of the global south headed to the global north, but also southerners moving to other southern places and northerners moving to other northern places. (Hamid 2017, 167)

It is interesting how this global migration takes one direction, featuring the movement of the unprivileged global south towards the more privileged world of the global north. Equally possible is the internal movement within the geopolitical space of the south or the north.

Ironically, Exit West features an unsettling image of the metropolitan city of London as an extended refugee camp, with a million migrants pouring into the city, occupying its uninhabited mansions. Furthermore, "the great expanses of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens" were soon "filling up" with the migrants' "tents and rough shelters" (Hamid 2017, 126). No European quarter seems to be immune to the ramifications of this global migration. The "voyage in" that Edward Said has introduced in Culture and Imperialism has taken a sweeping, massive form (Said 1994, 295). Those migrants are changing the demography of a metropolitan city, "forming their own legions" (Hamid 2017, 132),

and dividing London into dark and light spaces. The voyage from colonial peripheries to London has been addressed, with subtle irony, by the Jamaican poet, Louise Bennett in "Colonization in Reverse":

> Wat a joyful news, Miss Mattie,
> I feel like me heart gwine burs'
> Jamaica people colonizin
> Englan in reverse. (Bennett 1983, 106-107)

Whilst singing for the migrants' hopes for a new life in the motherland, the poem suggests that this act of reverse migration to the metropolis challenges a history of colonialism marked by racism and exploitation: "tun history upside dung" (Bennett 1983, 106-107). With accelerating racism, native Londoners respond with nationalist calls, inviting decision makers "to reclaim Britain for Britain" (Hamid 2017, 132). This means more borders and more security measures. A very clear translation of this call is the Brexit project. Britain seeks security and prosperity by retreat to some nativist closures, fortifying its interior circles to protect the homogeneity of the population against infiltrations of foreign species.

The invocation of Najib's travels in Shehadeh's narrative brings the openness and porousness of boundaries during the Ottoman Empire in sharp contrast with the colonial legacies of division and bordering. While focusing on Palestinian geographical frames, the narrative is

hinged upon the global dimension of the Israeli/Arab question. Hamid, however, has taken a more resounding global position. In *Exit West*, the unidentified city along with recurrent references to "the global south" and "global displacement" (2017, 167) indicates the globalizing tendency of the narrative. The locations to which migrants move are geographically dispersed throughout the globe as to include Lahore, Mykonos, London, and California. Moreover, frequent references to the media reports and the emergent topic of migrants further add a globalizing effect, as more cities come to scope.

The postcolonial narratives discussed here negotiate with postimperial melancholia in different ways. Hamid's novel offers a critique of that imperial nostalgia that refuses to mourn the loss of empire and yearns for that power that would re-homogenize the nation. Shehadeh, however, manipulates postimperial melancholia to offer a nostalgic historical return to the borderless landscape of Ottoman imperialism, suggesting a useful paradigm for a tolerant and multi-ethnic system. Negotiating bordering at the intersection of postcolonial forms and comparative imperialisms reveals possibilities for rifts. These rifts are vital for opening up and maintaining a critical position in relation to hegemonic modes and practices. Raja Shehadeh and Mohsin Hamid provide two different models for conceptualizing borders in relation to postimperial melancholia, highlighting the pressures that might rift these dividing formations.

Both narratives have mediated temporal and geographical rifts, against the borders of nationalisms and ethnic divides to offer an alternative imperial model of the Ottoman multi ethnic polity and ways of envisioning possible future mass displacement respectively. Shehadeh's post-imperial nostalgic recovery of Ottoman history, and Hamid's envisioning of future disconnectivity should be seen as opportunities to think of comparative frameworks that accommodate humanities beyond the intellectual and geographical borders of a Eurocentric frame and allow further mobility and multiplicity.

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Joyce, Walcott, and the Need for Homecoming Portrayed through Homeric Epics

Catherine Brown-Robison

"'This is the same story,' he says. 'This is 'The Odyssey'. Once I began to adapt it, I realized how underneath all that stuff about the gods and the threats and the Cyclops, this man is simply trying to get home to Ithaca, and is terrified of never getting there. It's something we all have -- the terror of never getting home. '" –Washington Post[1].

Introduction

James Joyce's *Ulysses* has long inspired readers and authors alike as each group seeks to understand both in-

dividual and collective struggles, those of an ordinary and an extraordinary nature. In part, what makes *Ulysses* unique is that it is itself inspired by very real past and past literary works, leaving readers to shape and mould what is left to us in the form of the novel. Possessing unique literary moves and methods alongside strangely inviting content, *Ulysses* does what few other texts can; it undeniably resembles that of *The Odyssey* while simultaneously working to tell the tale of the common Irish citizen, all through the lens of a man who struggles to support the political and cultural shifts taking place in his home country. While *Ulysses* demonstrates a willingness to break the mould and methods of writing, storytelling, and literature, it also invites, as it employs, a unique reading of history, as well as history's need to tell present and future tales. Less than a century after Joyce's finished work was made available to the public, Derek Walcott, long recognized for his literary achievements in stunningly pragmatic poetry, shared his own reimagined tale of homecoming: *Omeros*. This text has been heralded as a beautiful reimagining of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, bringing the two epics together to combine with the colorful culture of St. Lucia, an island whose complex history can be envisioned through the lens of the Homeric epic. Merely a few years later, Walcott once again reimaged *The Odyssey* in its original form; as a play, the contemporary adaptation titled *The Odyssey: A Stage Play* surprisingly encompassed the heart of *The Odyssey* while concurrently driving itself away from the style and setting, centering itself on the shores of St. Lucia to tell

a story of homecoming from the Caribbean. Walcott has been quoted as being inspired by Joyce and other Irish authors (Hirsch and Walcott 1979, 288) claiming "[t]hey were the niggers of Britain" (288) and communicated the suffering and sensibility of a people that few can convey solely through literature.

While it would be facile to simply unpack the ways in which Walcott too examines the human fear of "never getting home" and how Joyce inspires a unique resurgence in telling the stories of homecoming, both epic and ordinary, I feel that would be a disservice to both authors; to only examine the common thread of the everyday would share the hope and intent of the"everyday epic" that is often attributed to Joyce with none of the inspired enthusiasm that both Joyce's and Walcott's works deserve. My goal is to examine Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Play* and scenes from *Omeros* that illustrate not just an inspired and intentional shift toward recreating the Homeric epic as a postcolonial text, but further demonstrate how Joyce gave postcolonial writers like Walcott an opportunity to reimagine *The Odyssey* and create subversive rewritings for other authors, namely postcolonial writers seeking a new canvas on which to paint their stories and the stories of their people and communities. One beautiful thing about writing about someone like Walcott is that we have access to interviews and personal writings. Thanks to the back-breaking work of interviewers and scholars lucky enough to have met and interviewed Walcott, we have access to moments where

Walcott admits he was inspired by Joyce and other Irish writers (288). While there is no need to analyze passages and scenes to provewhat has been stated by the author himself, I intend to point to what his work, as inspired by Joyce, has given readers in the form of an opportunity, both to read this work as something that speaks to their own experiences, and to rewrite the work in such a way as it can influence their reading and writing processes. My hope is to demonstrate the ambition that he has left all writers, pointing to the good that can come of reading Joyce's *Ulysses* as something that can inspire creativity in postcolonial writings, a genre that is experiencing an epic all its own.

Joyce's Depiction of *The Odyssey*

James Joyce's *Ulysses* blends the qualities of the Homeric epic with the heart of the Irishness he sought to reject. Using characters and the physical landscape to tell a story, *Ulysses* can be easily perceived as a postcolonial text, and yet there is so much more to uncover as to how we can read this. It is important to clarify that this text does not demand that it be read alongside or in comparison to another work, namely a postcolonial one; the relationship between Joyce's interpretation and reimagining of *The Odyssey* as *Ulysses* points readers to poignant postcolonial themes that speak volumes on their own. One of the ways in which it does this is through the representation and use of memory; in *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of Ulysses*, John Rickard argues that "[j]ust as

no events or thoughts escape the mind but rather 'abide there and wait,' Joyce's text in *Ulysses* represents a memory that…retains all that has happened in the course of the novel as well as wider cultural associations" (Rickard 1999, 127). I would take this one step further and not only suggest that Joyce threads memories throughout the text, expecting readers to invoke their own memory of the reading, but that Joyce himself wrote from a place of memory by incorporating *The Odyssey* as the backdrop for this text, using his own memory of his interpretations to set the scene while simultaneously using a work that embodies the drive that memory inspires. Though Joyce was known for writing "for" those in Ireland, he used the landscape of Ireland to retell the ancient tale of *The Odyssey* in a modernist way that attempts to speak to the Irish experience through a postcolonial lens. In *Semicolonial Joyce*, editors Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes explain that they have employed the term "semicolonial" as the focal point of their work as

"signal[ing] [their] sense of a partial fit between this set of approaches and Joyce's writing. Rather than claiming that the issues raised and models offered by postcolonial studies can illuminate every element of Joyce's works or supersede other interpretive or theoretical frameworks, we believe that it is precisely from the limited compatibility between them that the most interesting lessons can be drawn – for both readers of Joyce and theorists of colonialism" (Attridge and Howes 2000, 3).

What is important is, rather than honing in on the use of this term as immediately definitive of Joyce's or Walcott's work, it speaks to the conversations surrounding their work, pointing to an inability or unwillingness in readers and scholars to solely mark Joyce's texts as "postcolonial." Here Walcott holds his own space as a writer because his works also fit the mould of semicolonial works. While Attridge and Howes are not entirely wrong in their suggestions about Joyce's work, my own research is pointing to the ways in which Walcott was inspired by Joyce, who in turn was inspired by Homer's epics as a way to tell a modern tale.

When we think of contemporary authors such as Derek Walcott and how the narrative of the Irish peoples speaks to similar issues of oppression, discrimination, and neglect that have been felt by countless other groups, we recognize that each is seeking a literary form that made room for their conversations and respective stories. *Ulysses* simultaneously brought to life the resurgence of the Homeric epic and made a space for works like Walcott's. While much of *Ulysses* can be interpreted as speaking on behalf of the everyday Irish person, this work will specifically examine sections of "Cyclops" that demonstrate a postcolonial reading while arguably speaking to similar moments in some of Walcott's works. The goal is to demonstrate not only the ability of Joyce's work to influence these other works, or even to demonstrate

how Walcott would have read Joyce's work, but to show what a probable reading inspired, created, and ultimately led to texts written by Walcott that closely resemble both Joyce's work and the heart of the Homeric epic. While my intent is not to suggest that Walcott was "best" at reimagining the epic, I would argue that there is something to be said for the postcoloniality of these works and how they might more so directly correlate with the Homeric epic in ways that Joyce's work was unable or unwilling to.

In *Ulysses*,"Cyclops," much like the other chapters, appears to have a "job" of its own. To tell a story that stands alone while at the same time conveying the message of the story as a whole is not unique to Joyce, and yet his approach leaves readers taken aback. This chapter expounds on the conflicting views we have seen on Irish nationalism and specifically how Leopold Bloom is situated within this space and as part of these conversations. While the entirety of this chapter offers insight into the lens through which Joyce viewed Bloom, as well as possible postcolonial themes he inserted, to effectively examine this alongside Walcott's other works I find it is important to only examine a single moment in each work in the hopes of identifying how each text as a whole demonstrates similar methods of reading Joyce, and therefore points to specifically similar moments that share the sentiments of postcoloniality and likely inspired such a reading.

While Bloom has spent much of his time in the bar waiting for Cunningham, his role seems particularly shifted toward fitting the role of Odysseus pinned against the citizen that fits the mould of Polyphemus. As their discussions of capital punishment and religion escalate far beyond idle chit-chat, the citizen becomes enraged at Bloom. This escalation moves throughout the chapter and finally comes to a head during the last few pages when Bloom has had enough after the citizen mocks him for his Jewishness and jokingly suggests that Bloom would be the "new Messiah for Ireland," (Joyce 1986, 277, line 1642) touting the line "[t]hree cheers for Israel!" (280, line 1791). As he follows him out of the pub the scene unfolds into one that most closely speaks to the altercation between Homer's Polyphemus and Odysseus:

> Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza.
> And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God.
> --He had no father, says Martin. That'll do now. Drive ahead.
> --Whose God? Says the citizen.
> --Well, his uncle was a Jew, says he. Your God was a Jew. Christ was a Jew like me.
> Gob, the citizen made a plunge back into the shop.
> By Jesus, says he, I'll brain that bloody Jew man for using the holy name.
> By Jesus, I'll crucify him so I will. Give us that biscuit box here.   (280, lines 1804-1812)

As Bloom is pictured speaking, pushing back on the citizen's argument, he calls forth examples of Jewish individuals who were involved in the arts and philosophy as a way to indicate their worth, which is interesting given what we quickly learned about the citizen and that this was likely lost on him. Notably, Bloom is sharing the truth with the citizen and onlookers in much the same way that Odysseus did, waiting to be far enough away (and quite able to ignore the jabs) and then shouts his true name at the Cyclops, enraging him and causing him to throw his boulder. Because this interaction is between Bloom and the citizen, the truth pertains to the differences between the two when it comes to religion, which is fitting for this text as it appears to demonstrate a long-needed discussion about religious controversies in Ireland that *The Odyssey* inherently points readers to, via the role of the gods. Without needing direct explanation as to how the citizen resembles the Cyclops, when we look to the beginning of the chapter, where the citizen is almost blinded by the end of the chimney sweep with his brush[2] we see a correlation between his physical and social responses to outside behaviors and opposing viewpoints, and the behavior and attitude of the Cyclops, both in Homer's *The Odyssey* and Walcott's later depictions of the Cyclops.

Though throughout the scene in the pub the citizen is seen as close-minded, arrogant, and touts the Irish Nationalist movement like a badge of honor for himself as

an Irishman, the actions he takes in reaction to Bloom's statements are what drives this work, and what arguably drives the narrative throughout the text in many ways. The act of throwing the biscuit tin in retaliation to Bloom's response offers interpretations that seemingly overlap each other; and it resembles the move of Polyphemus throwing the rock at Odysseus' boat, and is later the model for Walcott's interpretation of the Cyclops figure. While this is a simple examination of this scene, the power of this scene will be brought forth in the examination of Walcott's works. While it may seem potentially problematic to examine and interpret Joyce's work this way, it truly is no less problematic than audiences engaging with Homer's work through the lens of Joyce. By examining Walcott's texts,the goal is to convey the importance of the steps this writer took to recreate the story of *The Odyssey* using Joycean methods that created a postcolonial narrative, telling a story that speaks of all the courage of the past with the hope of the future.

Walcott's Renditions of The Odyssey & Postcolonial Readings

Derek Walcott's *Omeros* is a tale for the ages: blending the setting of St. Lucia with the motifs of *The Odyssey,* Walcott's reimagining of the Homeric epic as postcolonial is a demonstration of literary achievement like no other. Though Walcott was known for his poetic

prowess, this Nobel-Prize winning work demonstrates a talent unimaginable for many. *Omeros* not only uses the Homeric epic to tell a Caribbean tale, but it is inspired by other stories, and authors, who have long demonstrated a kinship to the Caribbean view and usage of literature as a way to express struggles shared between the two different cultures. While the literary approach to writing *Omeros* demonstrates a rereading of Joyce in its style and application, even making a point to depict Walcott, as then-narrator, seeing and hearing Joyce's ghost in Dublin (Walcott 1993, 201), in examining solely the moments and scenes that portray or involve depictions of the Cyclops of the Homeric epic by pointing to specific moments that all three texts have in common, I hope to more closely point to the commonalities between both authors and how this speaks to a shared experience of postcolonialism, despite their cultural differences. Within *Omeros*, the presence of a Cyclops figure or representation is threaded throughout the text, ever a reminder of its power and uniquely portraying this figure as a representation of many aspects of postcolonialism. One of Walcott's many reinterpretations of the Cyclops lies within the first pages of *Omeros*, where Seven Seas, a blind man who arguably resembles Homer and a Muse in the tale, is out to sea and considers the beginning of the day:

> O, open this day with the conch's moan, Omeros,
> as you did in my boyhood, when I was a noun
> gently exhaled from the palate of the sunrise.

A lizard on the sea-wall darted its question
at the waking sea, and a net of golden moss
brightened the reef, which the sails of their far ca-
noes

avoided. Only in you, across centuries
of the sea's parchment atlas, can I catch the noise
of the surf lines wandering like the shambling fleece

of the lighthouse's flock, that Cyclops whose blind
eye
shut from the sunlight. Then the canoes were galleys
over which a frigate sawed its scythed wings slowly.
    (Walcott 1993, 12-13)

Here Seven Seas calls on Omeros, another name for Ho-
mer , as a sort of prayer for the beginning of the day.
Seven Seas is blind, bu the is remembering the sounds
of the ocean, bringing the image of Homer's Cyclops to
the landscape of St. Lucia through memory, using a sin-
gle moment to speak to the method and meaning of the
entire poem: the use of memory as a conduit for stories
long in existence, but never told. We later see Walcott
once again play with the image of the Cyclops in *The
Odyssey: A Stage Play*, where the Cyclops is referred to
as only The Eye, and resembles the Foucauldian image
of power (Brown-Robison 2018, 2), where we see the
seeds of this later reimagination coming through in this
moment. In much the same way that Joyce presented the
Cyclops as a socially blind and misguided citizen, Walcott

depicts the Cyclops as a beacon of hope, a guiding star once living on the shores of St. Lucia that calls its sailors home. This can be interpreted as Walcott attempting to use elements of both Homer and Joyce to create a new image of the Cyclops, one that speaks to images past, while including his own reading of Homer's work as an opportunity to tell his own tale.

In "Black Odysseys: The Homeric Odysseys in the African Diaspora since 1939," Justine McConnell argues:

> The 'Homer-esque' story that Walcott composes in Omeros then, may be closer in sentiment and atmosphere to its ancient predecessor than the literary appreciations by classical scholars would be inclined to admit. Walcott is removing classical Greece from its pedestal, but he does so without lowering its value…" (McConnell 2013, 108).

McConnell most accurately notes the difficult yet necessary distinction between Homer's and Walcott's works, and wonderfully marks Walcott's movement of appreciation with a nod toward the ancient epic and the careful tearing down of the literary pedestal that prevents readers and authors alike from engaging or rereading this literature with his own Caribbean reimagining. While Walcott does this and more within *Omeros*, as we will further examine, he too demonstrates a sort of split view of his re-readings, not solely reading from Homer as the only source with a proper message worth sharing, but also

looking to Joyce, whose methods of reading and interpreting how *The Odyssey* speaks to human experiences so far untold. And yet, it must be remembered that this is not solely a reading of the "original" Homeric epic; rather it is a reading of both Homer and Joyce in that, while Homer inspired the heart of the tale, Joyce arguably inspired the approach to the retelling of the tale.

Merely a few years later Walcott was commissioned to write *The Odyssey: A Stage Play,* and it appears that in those few years, his interpretations of Odysseus, The Cyclops, and the meaning of the Homeric epic itself had become something new. Walcott's stage-play more closely portrayed the ancient epic, though its variances place his interpretation solidly within the contemporary reader's expectations. While it may seem easier to compare the effects of Walcott's work, comparing them to each other as postcolonial or contemporary works, the examination that offers such inspiring answers is that of Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Play* and Joyce's *Ulysses*. While *Omeros* has been heralded as the reimagining of *Ulysses*, *The Odyssey:A Stage Play* reinvents much of the literary movement and societal and cultural criticisms that Joyce demonstrates in his own work. In his rendition of *The Odyssey*, which is in much the same scenery as the original Homeric epic, the Cyclops is known also as The Eye, and the island on which he and his followers exist appears structured and tightly controlled. His being depicted as a strong political force, The Eye reads more so as an all-seeing Panopticon-like figure (Brown-Robison

2018, 7), one that sees and controls all on this island. When Odysseus bests him by stabbing him in the eye with a skewer, the Eye alerts the rest of the island, to which his followers respond on high alert. Yet, he is still inevitably powerless, for not only has he lost his eye, but the truth has now been revealed to him, only too late and much to his dismay:

> CYCLOPS
> NOBODY, YOU HEAR ME? NOBODY IS HIS NAME!
>
> ODYSSEUS
> SON OF POSEIDON! YOU OBSCENE OCTO-PUS!
> YOU TON OF SQUID-SHIT, WITH YOUR EYE POURING BLACK INK!
> MY NAME IS NOT NOBODY! IT'S ODYSSEUS!
> AND LEARN, YOU BLOODY TYRANTS, THAT MEN CAN STILL
> THINK!
> (Sirens moan. The CYCLOPS picks up an oil drum and hurls it at the retreating Odysseus, screaming.)
>   (Walcott 1993,
> 71-72)

One thing we notice immediately is the use of contemporary English as opposed to a poetic following of the Homeric epic style of writing; while other scenes incorporate a more traditional writing style, this moment in

particular is interesting because it blends the scene and traditional movements with traditional language, swearing, and even Ebonics, which we see in an earlier exchange between the Eye and Odysseus that speaks to an acknowledgement of race that is unseen in the traditional epic. Looking back to Joyce's work in "Cyclops," we see a similar method of writing that, while using The Odyssey as a backdrop, both authors blend their own cultural and societal understandings with the epic.The final assertion that "men can still think," which is likely attributed to the relationship between freedom and the Eye as a sort of overlord, is arguably representing thoughts on people's relationship to knowledge, which we see represented in the works of Homer, Joyce, and Walcott.

In many ways *Ulysses* is thought to be so enticing because it makes so much of daily life in Dublin, placing the city behind rose-colored lenses while simultaneously depicting the struggles of the everyday amongst the strong Irish history, using language play and setting (Wales 1992, 25). Throughout the "Cyclops" chapter the citizen uses uncommon Gaelic words, smattering them throughout his dialogue that is English and speaking to the modern Dublin he lives in (Wales 1992, 25), at the same time demonstrating a use of linguistic memory that creates a space for postcolonial writers like Walcott. As we can see above, Walcott implements this into his work as well, incorporating swearing and slang into these

scenes because, in so closely following the methods of the original epic, his story has its own voice against the epic. Walcott's work demonstrates a method of this even better in his treatment of Odysseus who, to charm the Eye, takes on a Black accent to make him laugh (Walcott 1992, 65). While we are not closely examining the relationship between language use and postcolonial writing, it is important that we recognize this is a critical piece of the foundation that supports the postcolonial narrative.

While the Homeric epic inherently speaks to many walks of life and cultural struggles, the methods that Walcott employs speaks to his reading of Joyce as an author and reader of *The Odyssey*. In *Washed by the Gulf Stream: The Historic and Geographic Relation of Irish and Caribbean Literature*, Maria McGarrity examines each author's relationship with and treatment toward the epic as a traditional method of story-telling, but one that requires steps further away from one's home in order to find the right steps forward (McGarrity 2008, 80). More specifically though, she brings to light an interesting question about the relationship between these two authors, positing

> "[a]re Joyce and Walcott somehow more at ease casting in the molds of island nations and seafaring heroes than they would have been had they chosen to call upon some other tradition? Or perhaps they are simply literary opportunists-erudite men who saw the absence of significant work invoking the epic in their own isles and took the chance to make their own knowing the import such works are likely to be given? Perhaps they are neither.   (91)

It appears that these authors are neither, as McGarrity suggests, operating as though they could not use, say, a Shakespearian play as a backdrop for their respective plays, nor are they seemingly playing to the interests of their majority of readers, given their respective genres. It is that the stories that needed telling were best suited to this backdrop, because the Homeric epic allows authors the space they need to have their conversations on race, religious stigma, or postcolonialism, and inevitably deals with issues of homecoming in the face of danger and uncertain death. It is important to recognize how these authors are received as a pair, observing how scholars like to examine them together as innovative writers whose experiences naturally connect, in recognition of their shared ability to write their histories and experiences onto the Homeric epic. But it is so much more than merely writing their stories onto the epic: these stories have a natural space amongst the ancient Greek texts, whether because of the historical significance or the nature of their stories, allowing room for postcolonial authors of all backgrounds to insert their narratives, allowing them to create a story that encompasses old and new.

Conclusion

James Joyce and Derek Walcott have both gifted audiences works that critically engage with the past while demonstrating creative ways we can reimagine these texts as they apply to current conversations surrounding postcolonialism. Joyce's creative approach to the epic-ness

that exists in the everyday story of the Irish does what few texts have the ability to: to reimagine the Homeric epic as a classical template that can portray and converse with modern concerns. Walcott's look to Ireland to tell the stories of those struggling on their own islands results in an exceptional view of what Joyce's work inspires, yet when we think of these two authors as having a relationship to *The Odyssey,* it may be instinctual to only consider this insofar as the text speaks to the original epic; and yet, when we consider the content with which each author grapples with, we recognize the undeniable thread of the postcolonial narrative that binds them to each other. The bustling city of Dublin near the Atlantic, thrums with the same sounds of the rushing Caribbean waters, both sharing in the struggles and miseries of the other while being simultaneously almost worlds apart. Though it is easy to demonstrate their differences, from their countless other works and the variances between them, to their writing styles and approach to literary depictions of their homelands, the strength that is seen in their respective takes on *The Odyssey* is unmatched in its demonstration of the postcolonial narrative as it relates to the Irish and Caribbean experience.

Though we might not automatically recognize Joyce as a postcolonial author and the same could technically be said of Walcott, it is important to recognize that the literary credentials for such a qualification are muddled at best. When we move beyond the literary classifications,

those that we feel are implied when grappling with post-colonial literature, we can more freely examine literary relationships between authors like Joyce and Walcott. Yet recognizing that these works can be examined as postcolonial is different than suggesting their authors can be designated as solely postcolonial authors; if anything, their being authors of different backgrounds offers new insight into how we consider these texts that are now being reinserted into our literary consciousness, having much more to offer than solely conversations on nationalism, religion, and conflict. Though each author's works delve into postcolonial themes throughout, the pointed look to the depiction of the Cyclops as reimagined by each allows for a focused view of the relationship between Joyce and Walcott that arguably speaks to the postcolonial themes throughout each text. Each Cyclops figure somehow depicts a dissatisfaction and disenchantment with forces on each authors shores, playing to the themes of the Homeric epic in ways few can, while creating a new method of writing all their own. By reevaluating the literary approach to the Homeric epic that occurs across literature, we might recognize the doors that are opened to readers, writers, and authors alike, as we navigate what it means to search for the representation of one's understanding through a reimagined story.

NOTES:

1. Taken from the Washington Post article titled "Derek Walcott's Odyssey." Streitfeld, David. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/style/1994/09/25/derek-walcotts-odyssey/dccfce4a-cf58-46e3-ac0f-a8435ecc3a6a/?utm_term=.62d2039356d6. September 25, 1994. Web.

2. *Ulysses*, Joyce, pg. 240, line 11

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A Sacred Covenant: Islamic Environmentalism in Ibrahim Al-Koni's The Bleeding of the Stone

Lava Asaad

The Sahara has occupied a major territory in the colonial imagination about the Other. The desert and its nomads have constituted a borderline state of being unequivocally distinguished from urbanized civilizations. The local diversity of the Sahara has been the focal point of Ibrahim Al-Koni, a Libyan writer who foregrounded local rituals and ways of being that are in clash with imperial and colonial practices. Known for being a mas-

ter of magic realism, he demystifies the Sahara and its Bedouins. Al-Knoi asserts that "the novel is the spirit of the secret, the desert its body, and myth its language" (*My Great Desert,* 1998, 122) Al-Koni attempts to resurrect a Bedouin identity untarnished by urban or colonial practices that tend to homogenize the human experience and he values the spirituality preserved in the desert. One of his most known works, *The Bleeding of the Stone* (1990), aligns his understanding of the locality of the desert and its traditions with the spiritual practices of its inhabitants. The novel revolves around the sacred waddan, a type of horned goat, whose flesh has a special value for western hunters since, the novel mentions, the animal has become extinct in Europe in 1627. Asouf, a Bedouin, refuses to aid John Parker, Cain and his helper Massud from hunting more waddans.

Al-Koni comes from a Tuareg tribe in Libya. The Tuaregs are nomad people who live across North Africa and who are considered Berber. Al-Koni, despite living between Moscow and Warsaw for over half a decade of his life, always returned to the Sahara in his writing, producing over 80 works, half of which have been translated to over 35 languages. Al-Koni's oeuvre has been compared to the works of the Saudi writer Abdul Rahman Munif in which he also situates the Saharah and its Bedouins at the center of narration. *Bleeding of the Stone* works as a model for *Gold Dust*, written in 1992 and translated by Elliott Colla, where the storyline accentuates the intrin-

sic bond between man and beast, and in which the main character isolates himself from his tribe to wander the dessert with his only companion, his camel. The Bleeding of the Stone, like all of Al-Koni's novels, centers morality in the Sahara against the greed and corruption taking roots in more urban communities.

To focus on the idea of place in the novel, the desert, one should put into perspective the author's and the characters' culture to understand the borderline existence of humans and animals within a postcolonial context. In this paper, I examine how Al-Knoi wards off the Eurocentric concept of consumption and desecration of the land and animals through relying on traditions rituals of Islam that honor the relationship between the human and the non-human. While countless scholarship has studied different aspects of this novel, I rely on an Islamic environmentalism framework to highlight the intricacies of the novel from a postcolonial environmental perspective. Islamic rituals are practiced throughout the novel. Al-Koni minimally explains the purpose behind the verses, prayers, ablution, rules of hunting that Asouf and his father converse about. Through these encounters, one finds that there are some rules in Islam dictating the believers to respect and protect nature and animals. This frame of reference recuperates Asouf and his understanding of the land and animals. Sharif S Elmusa has argued that Islamic scholars have relied on the Quran to formulate an eco-theology. However, Elmusa

believes that the shortcoming of such a framework is that it "seldom engages debates in contemporary environmental thought" (2013,12). While Elmusa has a valid point, this does not preclude developing an eco-Islamic analysis of the novel that resists colonial dilapidation of the colonized human and land. Elmusa, nevertheless, still sustains the idea that there is a "'chain of being' linking man, other sentient beings, the inanimate domain, all the way to divinity" (2013, 24). Elmusa introduces the "Ecological Bedouin" to postcolonial ecocriticism, a reference which will occur throughout the paper. The argument here will mainly focus on how Al-Koni utilizes Islam to communicate a message about Animal/Human relation. Al-Koni invites his readers to witness the construction of the Other (both humans and animals) in the desert, and how an Islamic counter discourse weakens the Western firm beliefs of the erroneous dismissal of spirituality, faith, and co-being with animals.

Critical studies have been opulent in connecting environment to colonial discourse. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*; *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies;* and *Environment and Empire* are a few examples that shed light on the correlation between environment and imperialistic agendas of expansion. Alfred W. Crosby in 1986 was the first to combine the term "ecological imperialism" forging a historical relationship between the two sides understanding the degradation of the environment in

colonized territories. The tension created between the colonizer and the colonized increased to engulf environmental displacement. Colonizing nature meant rearranging it to look like its European Edenic counterpart. Postcolonial ecocriticism has started the debate that nature has its own means in resisting being hegemonized, Westernized, and domesticated. James Beattie defines "environmental anxiety" to be classified as "concerns generated when environments did not conform to European preconceptions about their natural productivity or when colonization set in motion a series of unintended environmental consequences" (2011, 1). The Empire's attempt to remodel colonized areas has proven to be not only insufficient but also ecologically disturbing. Thus, a resisting ecology is not merely speculative or mystical, it can express itself in various forms. Crosby posed the following speculation during the nascent stages of colonial environmentalism: "Perhaps European humans have triumphed because of their superiority in arms, organization, and fanaticism, but what in heaven's name is the reason that the sun never sets on the empire of the dandelion? Perhaps the success of European imperialism has a biological, an ecological, component" (1986, 7). Expansion in this sense is the project to colonize people and, literally, to subdue nature. Ecological discourse was not absent from political discourse. For example, Empire Marketing Board was established in 1926 to produce pictorial representations of wildlife and the benefits of expanding the empire further. Over 700 posters

were introduced in six years highlighting "a positive image of an interdependent empire, in which exotic and beautiful environments, partly tamed, gave forth their riches for the British consumer" (Beinart and Hughes, 2007, 214). The commodification of nature and animals went hand in hand with commodifying colonized subjects. Philip Armstrong's article on "The Postcolonial Animal" extends revolutionary and political endeavors to incorporate resisting animals. Since the core of postcolonial resilience is different and unique from one culture to another, the desert and animals in Al-Koni's novel portray an example of rebellious humans and animals, highlighting the importance of Islamic discourse and modes of interaction over European examples of enlightenment, civilization, and agency.

Thus, in an attempt to write back against colonialism and Western beliefs whether of humans or animals, Al-Koni's novel fulfills this mission. His reliance on local and Islamic embracement of animal rights buttresses his postcolonial project in defending both humans and nonhumans. What gives Islamic environmentalism a plus over Western Environmental viewpoint is the long historical engagement with animal rights since medieval ages. To acknowledge the awareness of animal rights in Islam, the novel adds an important aspect to environmental postcolonial studies, which strongly celebrates aboriginal cultures in maintaining close ties with their natural milieu. Most Muslim environmental scholars

have affirmed that the oneness of creation puts humans and nonhumans on an equal base. Although the natural world was put into service for mankind, this by no means implies the superiority of humans or that this is nature's sole purpose behind its existence. Nature is a sign of God's creational multitudes and varieties. Mawil Y. Izzi Deen cites Ibn Taymiyyah, a theologian and logician in medieval Islam, who was known for defending animal rights and interpreting that God created both men and animals to worship Him. In other words, both of them have this shared responsibility to praise God, thus, emphasizing the intellectual components they both have. Islamic ethical laws put limits to human's trespass on animal's existence, as Deen explains:

> Islamic ethical values are based not on human reasoning, as Aristotle claimed values to be, nor on what society imposes on the individual, as Durkheim thought, nor on the interests of a certain class, as Marxists maintain. In each of these claims values are affected by circumstances. In Islam, ethical values are held to be based on an accurate scale which unalterable as to time and place. Islam's values are those without which neither persons nor the natural environment can be sustained. (2004, 161)

Certainly, we can add another faulty dimension that the civilization of the colonizer is not the measuring stick for all humanity and animal world to abide to. Islamic discourse, thus, relies on Quran to regulate the relation-

ship between humans and their environment. The word Earth in the Quran is mentioned 485 times testifying its importance in a worldly religion (Deen, 2004, 162). Muslim scholars were conscious of the importance of animals in their religion well before, for example, the Australian Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) or Tom Regan who coined the term "animal rights" in *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983).

There are two narratives in the novel: one represents Western Enlightenment ideas of human superiority over colonized people and animals, and Al-Koni's prime narrative of species' oneness relying on religious discourse in general and Islamic discourse in particular. Colonial imaginative narrative of the Other extends to include animals as well. The purpose behind conflating two species together is an attempt to show how pejorative treatments can extend to both species in the Sahara. The novel brings forth an example of animals that refuse to be overpowered. When Asouf's father tries to haunt the waddan, he "saw a rancor and wretchedness together in his [waddan's] eyes" (2002, 19). This spirit of resistance continues when the father explains that he "saw stubbornness and wildness, and many other things I didn't even understand" (2002, 19). The resisting animal in combat with the hunter gives an image of struggle between two equals until the father realizes that he would never defeat the raging animal: "I leaped up and ran to my camel to snatch the rifle hanging from the saddle"

(2002, 19). The intrusion of this man-made instrument ends the fight with the waddan apprehending his weaker situation in front of the rifle. In a suicidal attempt, the waddan "climbed the rocks in a single swift movement, then leaped to the ground and broke his neck. The blood gushed out from his nostrils, and, after he was dead, his eyes were open and that strange look was still there— the mixture of wretchedness and rancor and helplessness" (2002, 20). Asouf's father comprehends the message behind the suicide as a moment of final defiance; the hunter would not be able to catch his prey alive. This encounter between two species highlights the similarities between the two until the civilized human relies on the power of arms to conquest the Other. Asouf's father learns to revere the waddan's spirit, the American John Parker and his miniature Cain, on the other hand, go to extreme measures.

The similarities between the flesh of an animal and that of man are emphasized in the novel, therefore, ideas about consuming them ultimately have the same concept. Asouf, a castaway from civilized and urbanized areas in the desert has also been subjugated, just like the waddan, to fabrications and illusions. Cain, upon meeting Asouf, asks him whether it is true that desert people mingle with jinni women in the caves. On his Land Rover, Cain curses the desert as the cause for his harsh trip to a point where Asouf wonders "What had the desert done to deserve all these insults?" (2002, 75). The des-

ert and the animals have been put through a process of definitions. However, the true essence of the desert is that it stretches peacefully in a state of being "merciful to God's worshipers" (Al-Koni, 2002, 77). Cain, carrying his gun given by one officer of the American camp in Gharyan, a company searching for oil, disturbs the ecological peacefulness of gazelles in the desert. Convinced of his superiority, Cain continues with his relentless pursuit after flesh, and he remains ignorant of animal's role in the desert: "He doesn't see how this devilish machine is a betrayal of nature, breaching the rules of noble conflict and seeking to win the day through the ugliest trickery" (2002, 88). This has always been the backup scenario for imperialism through the complete destruction of a colony's culture and the subsequent looting of its natural resources.

The most obvious and disturbing imperialistic aspect in the novel is John Parker, who is introduced in chapter, "The Opium" where animals, like humans, suffer the twisted fantasies of a colonial mind. While being captivated by Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Sufism, and Islam at the University of California, Parker's years of service in the Marine in Tunisia augmented his inventions of tales about desert animals. In what seems to be an orientalist book, Parker speaks of a French philosopher who explained how by consuming the flesh of a gazelle, the person will be closer to God. Parker's need to hunt and eat gazelles unified him with Cain. In their search after

the waddan, having almost wiped out gazelles in the desert, the reader perceives the process of colonial fabrications of animals, especially when Cain, as devilish as he is, explains Parker's intention and greed:

> If I wiped out the gazelles, he said evenly, you helped me do it. You gave me the trucks and the guns, and you ate your fair share of the bag—more than your fair share. You're the one who wiped out the desert gazelles, after hammering my ear with all those fairy tales about the poor beast's meat having divine secrets lurking in it. You're the biggest criminal of the lot. You say how marvelous gazelles are, how innocent they are, then you sink your teeth in their flesh, in search of some secret that doesn't even exist outside your own weird head. You pretend to be kind to animals, and yet you're greedier than me, greedier than all the meat eaters in the desert. The worm tickling your teeth's fiercer than the one in mine. (2002, 110-11)

Unsurprisingly, the same strategies were used to colonize nations under the pretext that the Empire wanted to spread civilization or the word of God, in case of missionaries. Falsifications and stories about the Other only existed in Western books. Preserving human rights in the colonies, or in this case animal rights, is, as Aimé Césaire explains to be only "pseudo-humanistic," or one can say, pseudo-environmental.

The opening of the novel starts with a verse from the Quran: "There are no animals on land or birds flying on their wings but are communities like your own" (2002, 1). This line is one of the most quoted proofs by environmental Muslim scholars. Al-Koni, like other defenders of green Islam, sets the tone of the novel stating that it is about the sameness of species emphasized by God. These other communities, which have often been ignored by literary texts will be examined as a community sharing similarities with mankind. The sole purpose of animals is to worship their Creator, just like humans are supposed to. These verses testify against the common condemnation of world religions that are believed to be anthropocentric. In *Animals in the Quran*, Sarra Tlili addresses some scholars' views which ascertain that Islam has helped to build a hierarchical relationship between humans and nonhumans. Against these affirmations, Tlili resorts to Quran and how the "linear- atomistic" interpretation of it proves to be fallible (2012, 49). Quran, she asserts, cannot be read like a Western text and cannot, therefore, be hold responsible for misreading it through applying Western interpretations, theories and science on it. 7 out of 114 chapters in the Quran are named after different animals. The longest chapter in the whole book is called "The Cow." Moreover, Tlili writes that the word most often used to refer to animals (*dabba*) is sometimes used to all living creatures, including mankind (2012, 71). Tlili also summarizes viewpoints on animals saying that

> The depiction of some nonhuman animals represents them as moral beings, capable of facing and making moral choices. According to many interpretations of the Quran, nonhuman animals will be resurrected. Even if their existence, unlike that of humans, is perhaps not everlasting, they will still receive compensation for undeserved suffering and retributions for the deeds they have performed in this life, which points to their accountability. (2012, 72)

Certainly, examples of accountability are evident in the novel where sometimes animals seem to have some human sins. In other words, Al-Koni is not humanizing animals since they are both accountable in front of their Creator, hence, they both have their own deeds without saying that animals are acting like humans. While Asouf is preparing to pray at the beginning of the novel, he notices how "Satan entered the goats, who took evident pleasure in butting at the very moment he says, 'God is great' and began murmuring the Fatiha, as if they were proud of their horns or wanted to show him their skills" (2002, 4). This passage shouldn't be interpreted that Al-Koni is anthropomorphizing the goats, but that they are also prone to be tempted by Satan to disobey God, much like how humans would be. The statue which has an image of a priest and the waddan shows an example of animal's connection with a deity: "The majestic waddan, crowned with its two curved horns, was in harmony with its god; the prayer had, it appeared been accepted, and the waddan had found favor with the deity of the

shrine" (2002, 7). Whether the shrine is of a Muslim deity or not, the concern here is that animals, like humans, are expected by their God to show praise and gratitude.

Another example where Al-Koni treats animals in his novel according to Islamic teachings is hunting. The prophet Muhammad, to begin with, prohibits hunting for sport, and it is only permitted if the need for food is necessary. This explains why Asouf's father clarifies to his son that "never to hunt more than one gazelle each trip" (2002, 37). Moreover, his father instructs him to never hunt a pregnant animal. Elmusa clarifies hunting rituals where "the Ecological Bedouin herds animals, but also hunts them. Ironically, empathy with the animals is often manifested during the hunt, in the very act of killing them" (2013, 22). Certainly, Al-Koni's critics have noticed his attempt to generalize the concept of religion including Islam and some other indigenous African rituals in the Sahara. By making human beings accountable in life and the afterlife for their maltreatment of animals, this puts limit to human's cruelty over animals. When Asouf's father kills the waddan to feed his starving family, "he wept before he did it" manifesting a relationship that not only ruled by God's regulations, but also a striking example of flow of emotions and responsibility between humans and animals.

Tlili quotes Ibn Kathir, Sunni/ Sufi historian when he devalues the assumptions that humans have dominance over animals; just because they seem to be using the

latter for travel or food, this doesn't indicate animal's subjugating status. God puts both animals and humans at the service of each other: "Humans [have the ability to] subdue these animals while the latter remain docile and do not resist them, to a point that a small child would ride a camel, make it kneel down or stand up as he wishes, while the camel remains compliant" (qtd. in Tlili, 2012, 78). Muslim scholars have explained that this doesn't mean that the child has power over the camel, but it rather shows the "amenability of the camel" and not the child's attempt to coerce the camel into doing something. The contrast here is maintained that although camels can be extremely powerful creatures, they are affable with mankind. In the novel, Asouf's father compliments the gracefulness of camels: "Did you ever, in the whole desert, see a more beautiful camel? One that was more obedient, braver and more patient? Did you ever see one that was more intelligent and sensible?" (2002, 43). And the praise continues about this noble camel to typify an exemplary model of camels, again not to merely anthropomorphize them. Asouf's father's usual advice is that "Animals are more faithful than people" (2002, 44). The father's lamentation doesn't stop at praising the camels only, but he continues to melancholically weep over the status of gazelles and human cruelty to them in the desert: "I just don't understand. Why should this wicked creature man chase such an angel? . . . Maybe that's why God punishes us, refuses to let us catch it alive" (2002, 45).

Probably the most famous chapter in the novel is "The Covenant" where gazelles are given agency to explain to the reader why they put themselves, sometimes, at the service of human beings. This glimpse into their world affirms that they do have a community, a language, and motivations. This kind of stories is not unheard of in Islam. In "The Ant" chapter in the Quran, the section tells the story of Solomon and the ants. As he was marching with his army, made of jinn, men and birds, an ant announces that they should all rush toward their dwellings for fear of being crushed by Solomon and his soldiers. Not surprisingly then that Al-Koni follows an example from the Quran of a talking animal proving that they have access to language and communication, not in a sense of a human language per se. Most importantly, these stories in the Quran are not to be regarded fables, but they are considered real. In the novel, the gazelle recounts to her young calf the migratory journey of going to Algeria and then back to Libya. The animal conversation in the novel is a didactic piece. From the wise gazelle, we hear a reiteration of Islamic beliefs that "God, honored all creatures and gave them life . . . He who sacrifices himself to save another's life sees into that secret and wins immortality" (2002, 102). In the mother's explanation to the dissenting gazelle, she comments on the equality of all creatures, and perhaps, her superiority since she is about to win God's favor. The female gazelle seems to be in-tuned with God's decrees by sacrificing herself. Tlili also explains how in the Quran, those who

are superior, whether of men, animals or jinn, are those who worship God the most.

The grotesque and horrifying image of Cain in his life pursuit after animals is painted in a clear contrast to the permissibility of consuming animals in Islam. While we see Asouf's father strictly following the role of killing animals for necessity, and also Asouf's vegetarian habits are mentioned, we have Cain on the opposite side killing animals to feed an insatiable hunger for flesh. The prophet was reported saying that Muslims should "avoid obnoxious things: polytheism; magic; the killing of breathing beings, which God has forbidden except for rightful reason" (qtd in Islam and Islam, 2015, 107). Having a deadly sin on his back, Cain ends up wiping off entire herds: "She dropped to the ground and lay on her right side, craning her head toward the qibla," the gazelle prepares herself to die in an Islamic way facing the direction to Mecca following burial rituals in Islam where the head of the dead person should be directed to the qibla. We can then safely conclude that Al-Koni has an Islamic subtext in his novel to narrate a story of human-animal relationship showing the shared destiny and the same treatment they endure at the hand of imperialist projects.

As an institution, Islam as a religion might not be the direct route for environmentalists to turn to since atrocities have been committed in its name. This is not a pa-

per to defend how some extremists have reshaped Islam, but this is rather an attempt to enlarge ecocritical postcolonial discourse on animal rights. Orientalism, an institution in itself, is changing its face but the core goals are fundamental. Excluding certain religions and beliefs from today's academic discourse on animal rights is an indication of a hierarchical system of knowledge. Al-Koni, took the responsibility as a writer to write off mainstream allegations of Islam and the nomads of the desert, freeing both humans and animals from the shackles of colonial imagination. The novel contextualizes all these conflicting sides, systems of oppressions and attempts of resistance between human and nonhuman relationships. Al-Koni addresses issues of agency and who has the right to defend animal rights, ending with the vindication that Western environmentalism has no right to exclude religious discourses from environmental postcolonial studies.

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Aesthetics and the Rhetorical Discourse of the Ọjọjọ Masquerade Festival of the Igbudu People of Warri, Nigeria.

Peter Emuejevoke Omoko

Introduction

One of the most affected areas in the negative assumptions that derive from the colonial experience of the African people in literary and cultural studies is oral literature. This manifestation is subsumed in the uncharitable stereotypes and delineation of African oral literature as primitive and fetishistic. The advent of modern African literature in the 19th century does not in any way makes African oral literature subordinate to its written coun-

terpart. However, because of its heavy reliance on the indigenous language systems and traditional aesthetic modes, many European scholars have regarded it as below the written tradition. This idea is well expressed by Walter Ong who believes that:

> In an oral culture, to think through something in non-formulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms, even if it were possible, would be a waste of time, for such thought, once worked through, could never be recovered with any effectiveness, as it could be with the aid of writing. It would not be abiding knowledge but simply a passing thought, however, complex (Ong 1982, 35-36).

Ruth Finnegan warns against this generalization and misrepresentation of the two literary traditions especially in terms of creativity and authenticity. According to her, there "is no clear-cut line between 'oral' and 'written' literature, and when one tries to differentiate between them – as has often been attempted – it becomes clear that there are constant overlaps" (Finnegan 2012, 2).

The basic tenets of post-colonialism derive essentially from the reaction of the colonised people through their acts against western epistemologies. However, there is currently the tendency for the colonised people, due to long period of disorientation, to see their literary productions and even their language as subordinate to those of the imperial centre. Bill Ashcroft et al in their book,

The Empire Writes Back describe the term postcolonial, "to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present" (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 11). According to them, the reason is simply because "there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by the European imperial aggression" (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 11).

In recent times, many of the cultures that once held the African people together are on a precipitous decline as a result of western religious orientation being sponsored by different Christian charismatic groups which see everything that constitute African cultural enactments in the form of festival, funeral rites and ritual observances as primitive and fetishistic that will certainly lead the African people to eternal perdition. The foregoing is not peculiar to Africa but the same is the case in many of the 'third world' countries; it is one of the tragedies that the natives in the provinces have to contend with should there be need to rescue their humanity from total collapse. Contemporary reality has shown, especially in oral traditions, that the colonised people no longer feel confident in practicing their cultural productions that have distinguished them over time; a situation that has placed the oral artist and his art as inferior to his modern counterpart. In many African societies, such indigenous observances like festivals and ancestral venerations are disdainfully looked upon by the youths who in a single swoop join the western celebration of Halloween which

is a western equivalent of ancestral veneration. The reason for this inferiority complex and artistic liturgy, Sunny Awhefeada tells us, is not far-fetched. According to him, at

> the heart of the colonial agenda was the coloniser's desire to negate whatever the African privileged; and one of the casualties was orature which the intrusive colonial order branded as primitive at the expense of the scribal mode that was considered modern (Awhefeada 2011, 222).

It is against this backdrop that Ikenna Kamalu affirms that "postcolonial writings are expressions of the experiences of these marginalized, dislocated and exploited societies, and their quest to salvage their rich historical values from the cesspool of imperial domination" (Kamalu 2011,56). However, in this essay, postcolonial rhetoric is not set to wage eternal war against western epistemologies but to show that African oral literature in the form of festivals is an authentic brand of literature and not a variant of western literature.

Performance holds a significant place in the realisation of artistic and cultural productions; in song-poetry, narratives and even in dramatic enactments in traditional oral societies. Without performance, an oral piece is frozen and cannot be appreciated. This is so, because, the piece is not written down somewhere as in the literate

culture, but composed and memorised by artist(s). Until such artistic creations already memorised by artist(s) are performed, essentially before an audience, it cannot be said to have been realised. In festival for instance, these oral artistic and cultural productions such as song-poetry, tales, dance, mime, drumming, etc. find useful channels of expression in masquerades and ritual displays. In fact, festival constitutes the theatre, in the real sense of the word that embodies all the strands of traditional artistic and cultural productions and their realisation nuances. It is in this regard that Olu Obafemi informs us that "the contemporary theatre of Africa is linked to and draws from individual rituals, festival, folklore, and seasonal rhythms of ancient and indigenous performance traditions" (Obafemi 2016, 180).

Festival, according to Dumbi Osani, "is a general celebration characterised by feasting, merriment and entertainment, observed to mark a religious faith, commemorate a historical event or repeat an ancient practice" (Osani 2017, 184). It reinforces the people's belief in the supernatural and establishes their desire to align with the common values of the past. Through festival celebration, the African people not only imitate actions and ritual observances of time past; either in song, dance, mime and or mock dramatic enactment that shows their reliance on the spiritual essence of the community, but serves as the circumambient presence of the gods and ancestors in the affairs of men. It is in this light that

Stanley Amah believes that festivals

> are a people's conscious communal effort to retain a hold on their ancestors and to invoke both these great ones and the communal deities whose blessings and goodwill are indispensible to the well-being of the community (Amah 1986, 50).

The Ojojo masquerade festival, which constitutes the focus of this essay, not only acts as a distinct artistic performance by which the people regulate their spiritual link with their ancestors, but provides authentic evidence for the interpretation of drama in festival celebration.

The Ojojo masquerade festival is celebrated exclusively by Igbudu community, one of the seven communities that make up the Agbarha-Ame kingdom of Warri, Nigeria. The other communities in the Agbarha-Ame kingdom of Warri are Otovwodo-Agbarha, Oteghele, Ukpokiti, Ogunu, Edjegba and Okurode-Urhobo. Although the festival is celebrated exclusively by the Igbudu people, the festival bears essential spiritual essence to the kingdom as a whole. Thus, during its celebration, whenever there is a spiritual quagmire that involves a masquerade and a community member, it is the Chief Priest of the Agbarha-Ame kingdom known as *Olowu-Edje* that acts as the spiritual head who communes with the ancestors and the Ojojo deity for the spiritual well-being of the entire community. Significantly, though, the Ojojo deity chooses its own Chief Priest, *Osedjo* and Priestess, *Oniedje*

as different from the Chief Priest of the community. In most cases, the community's Chief Priest is also accepted by the deity as its priest.

The festival which is celebrated bi-annually by Igbudu community attracts many visitors from virtually all the communities that made up the Agbarha-Ame kingdom and beyond. This is because, the Ọjọjọ masquerade festival constitutes what Osani refers to as a traditional festival, which according to him, "are integral aspects of the people's culture and originated from their apprehension of, and consequent responses to, the forces operative in their immediate environment and the universe" (Osani 2017, 184). The Ọjọjọ masquerade festival takes as its principal objectives, artistic entertainment and the purification of the community. This idea quickly comes to mind when one considers the religious and spiritual observances that come to play during the festival. The masquerades represent for the people, a spiritual ideal to re-jig the spiritual health of the community; that is, the people's relationship with the deity of prosperity, Ọjọjọ! Perkins Foss informs us that "Urhobo masquerade performances do not exist primarily for the pleasure of the audience and participants; rather, they are created for the enjoyment of the spirits themselves" (Foss 2004, 101).

The foregoing idea about the relationship between the people and the spirits during festival is well embedded in the people's folklore. The rhetoric of superstitions and myths are foregrounded in many of the African festivals

as means to adumbrate the facility of the people's so-cio-cultural heritage by way of making statement about the people's beliefs. For instance, in a personal interview with Elder Atortor Maku, of Igbudu community on Oc-tober 8, 2019, he noted with certainty, that all the mas-querades that participate during the festival come direct-ly from the river and thus represent the spirits. When I informed him that some of the individuals bearing the masquerade masks can sometimes be identified by keen observers, he insisted without empirical explanation, that all the masquerades come from the river as spirit representations of the Ọjọjọ deity.

These superstitions and myths surrounding the mas-querades explain how they are seen and revered by the people in the community. Even if the masquerades are identified as members of the community, the people must suspend their disbelief and accept the superstition that they are no longer the people they used to know, that lived around them – they are now gods, water spirits sent to intermingle with the people to establish equilib-rium between the living and the ancestors. In tradition-al African societies, the dead ancestors and spirits are believed to return and dwell among the people during festival celebrations. Michael Dash agrees with this no-tion of superstition as a counter rhetoric of postcolonial discourse when he explains that postcolonial literature resorts to "myths, legends and superstitions of the folk in order to isolate traces of a complex culture of sur-

vival which was the response of the dominated to their oppressors (and to) shatter the myths of 'historyless-ness' or 'non-achievement'" (Dash 1995, 200). It should be well observed here that in time past, it was believed that the ancestors dwelt among the people but became offended as a result of human pollution and left to their present abode in the spirit world. However, they return only during festivals especially during ancestral worship typical of Halloween festival, dedicated to remembering the dead by the west. This is because, during festival, the community is cleansed, creating a habitable environ-ment for them to relate with the people. In most cases, they only find solace in the community or family shrines which is believed to be free from human pollution – there, non-initiates are not expected to enter and defile it.

During its celebration, the festival parades over twen-ty-five to thirty different types of masquerades. On the days the festival, which lasts ten days, would be celebrat-ed, the chief priest would invite the entire community to assemble at the village square (*Otorere*) with a bottle of gin. It is at this gathering that the day of the com-mencement of the festival is announced. When it is ac-cepted, serious preparation would start. On the evening of that day, two masquerades: *Oghrodjẹ* and *Adjamikoko* would appear. They would go around the community, visiting important personalities who would in turn enter-tain them. This visitation, which lasts two days, signals the commencement of the festival. It is expected at this

point that those visited by the masquerades should have kept their homes clean to receive the blessings of the deity. This spiritual visitation tallies with the point made by Osani when he posits that in "many communities in Nigeria, traditional New Year Festival, by whatever names they are called, usually entail cleansing rituals through which individuals, families and entire communities are purified and thus renewed in preparation for entry into the new year"(Osani 2017, 193).

For instance, in the morning before the masquerades appear in their sequence, the drummers would enter the arena that acts as a stage to prepare their drums. When they are satisfied with the preparation, they would start drumming with singers, comprising men and women, performing different songs specially composed to praise the Ọjọjọ deity. As the orchestra plays on, able bodied men, women and elders dance in a processional ritual into the arena. Anyone that is not costumed ostentatiously for the festival is not allowed to enter the arena. The dancers dance to the rhythm of the drums as well as the songs which adumbrate the people's closeness to the deity. Darah gives an idea of what constitutes aspects of many of Urhobo annual festival of which the masquerade display/dance takes a significant stage. According to him, songs, dance, and drama dominate these events, which, because "merriment and the aesthetic effect are their prime objective, tend to blend ritual and secular arts" (Darah 2004, 110). Thus the moment the mas-

querades enter the arena, the dancers withdraw into the background to allow the masquerades perform as the song and the drum tempo is increased. As I have noted elsewhere, the masquerades "rely on the tempo of the drums and each drumbeat is punctuated by the exchanges between the lead singer and the group (masquerades) – all accentuated in dramatic fashion" (Omoko 2016, 98).

Fig. 1: A masquerade being led into the arena by participants ostentatiously dressed for the festival

After the *Oghrodjẹ* and *Adjamikoko* are done with their parades and visitations, *Igbine* masquerade would appear. Three *Igbine* masquerades would perform at the village

square for two days and they would be followed by *Ig-beragha*. These masquerades are specially costumed with dreadlocks representing the sea god called *Ogberagha* in the people riverine ecology. Like the *Igbine* masquerades, three *Igberagha* masquerades would perform at the village square to entertain the audience.

On the seventh day, *Edjọ-Evwẹrẹ* (literally, Ijo Masquerades) ranging between twenty and twenty-five would appear. Their appearance typifies the Urhobo people's affinity with other riverine communities of the Niger Delta. Darah underscores this point when he explains that "in the Niger Delta, the Urhobo, the Ijo, the Isoko, and the Itsekiri share the basic features of masquerade art." According to him, the "images and icons represented in the masks are drawn from the environment and folklore.… Urhobo masks depict ideas of forest spirits or celestial bodies" (Darah 2004, 112)

Hence each of the *Edjọ-Evwẹrẹ* masquerades carries the masks of various animals, fish and figures they need to represent their roles. Each group of masquerade has its own kind of song and instrument that accompany its dance style similar to those in other cultures. J.S. Boston writes of similar masquerade tradition among the Ibo of eastern Nigeria and explains that "each type of masquerade has a characteristic rhythm, which is produced by a subtle and intricate combination of voices, instruments, and stylized movement, and this rhythm supplies

a compulsive force to the performance, as the plot does in European drama." According to him, "it also creates a dramatic link between the various elements of the masquerade, which are often scattered in different parts of the village" (Boston 1960, 55).Thus, the *Edjọ-Evwẹrẹ* would entertain the spectators/audiences for the entire day at the dance arena, displaying in flamboyant style, different artistic steps.
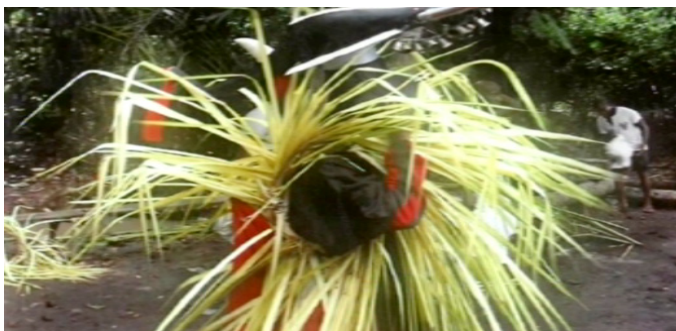

Fig 2: Masquerades displaying masks of various kinds of fishes

Oghrodję and *Adjamikoko* masquerades would appear again on the eight day. While on the eve of the festival's final day, *Igoni* and *Ovie-Edjo* are led into the arena by two other masquerades who act as their bodyguards. These two masquerades are resplendently costumed for the occasion. As its name implies, the *Ovie-Edjo* (king of masquerades) is a beauty to behold.

However, on the last day of the festival, all the masquerades, beginning from *Oghrodję* and *Adjamikoko* to *Igoni* and *Ovie-Edjo* would appear at the arena to perform before a large crowd of spectators. After the end of the festival, *Okruyovwin* masquerade would come as a carrier to cleanse the community and take away all the sins of the community. *Okruyovwin* is always roughly costumed and it is stoned symbolically by children with plantain stalks. Its appearance signifies the end of the ten days of the Ojojo masquerade festival.

Dramatic Aesthetics in the Ojojo Masquerade Festival

There is plenty of drama in the masquerade performances of the Ojojo festival of the Igbudu people of Warri, ranging from imitation, dance movements, miming, song/music, drumming, elaborate costumes and spectacle. The presence of audience and a well codified stage arrangement during the masquerade performances at the arena attest to the people's theatrical and dramatic

sense. Aesthetics (Urinrin) as used in this essay relates to the experience or feeling of beauty and satisfaction the spectator derives from the masquerades' performances. This feeling of satisfaction is significant on the basis of the masquerades' display in which the festival's artistry is conveyed. It also constitutes the overall indices of the festival, ranging from the masquerade's performances, group processions, drumming, dance, ritual and their vocal echoes. In other words, the aesthetics of the Ọjojo masquerade festival is expressed through the dramatic display in which the various masquerades imitate human actions and ideas which delights the spectators. Ojaide explains aesthetic to mean "notions of beauty, taste, and artistic merit". He adds that aesthetic "involves standards and principles for judging cultural productions" (Ojaide 2009, 4).

One of the dramatic aesthetics of the Ọjọjọ masquerade festival, therefore, is the presence of a complete and synchronised plot with organic structure and thematic message. This can be seen in the mock dramatic enactment on the final day of the festival. This dramatic enactment not only creates emotional and intellectual delight for the spectators/audience, but creates in their minds, a lasting spectacle of aesthetic satisfaction and spiritual fulfilment.

On the final day of the festival, while all the masquerades, beginning from *Ogbrodjẹ* and *Adjamikoko* to Ig-

oni and *Ovie-Edjọ* have performed in their sequence, three masquerades, specially costumed for the purpose emerge from the lots to perform the drama of "Peace and Happiness." This dramatic enactment which normally climaxed the festival is performed in mime and presents three masquerades; one playing the role of a father, another performing that of a mother while the last, plays the role of a child – in a family setting. The three masquerades step into the arena to engage in a flamboyant display to the admiration of the spectators/audience – each dance step is punctuated by the rhythm of the drums.

However, in the midst of the excitement, the child (masquerade) is tactically withdrawn from the arena without the parents knowing. This done, the drum changes its tune to a dirge, thus jolting the parents to pay attention to their surroundings. The moment the father notices that the child is missing, he dances menacingly towards the other (the mother masquerade) with both hands spread wide. "Where is my child," it would ask in mime. The mother responds in an "I don't know" gesture. At this point, the atmosphere becomes charged as other masquerades in the arena bows to avoid the anger of the father (masquerade) who is bigger in size than the others. Both (father and mother) dance menacingly across the arena with the rhythm of the drums punctuating their steps. At intervals, one dances to the admiration of the spectators/audience, suddenly it remembers the

lost child and then charges towards the spectators/audience. As the suspense heightens, the father charges at the mother who bows submissively in apology for her negligence. The spectators watch with interest as both desperate masquerades make gesture to them if they had seen their child.

This mock drama is enacted for about thirty minutes, and then suddenly, the lost child is released into the arena. The mother sees it first, embraces it and happily brings it to the father. The father is excited in uniting with his child. The appearance of the child triggers uproar in the spectators/audience. The three masquerades dance to the drummers who increase the tempo of their drumming. Other masquerades join in the celebration. Thus, signalling the end of the festival.

In this mock drama, the family as a social unit is emphasized. The various actions in the mock drama within the masquerades display are not only stylised but are representation of human actions both at the family and the communal levels. It is against this background that Ruth Finnegan informs us that dramatic enactments, especially in African festival setting, should be taken seriously as aspects of drama. She believes that the most important aspect of African drama "is the idea of enactment, of representation through actors who imitate persons and events" (Finnegan 2012, 486). Moreover, the imitation and representation of human actions constitute the ba-

sic aspect of the dramatic aesthetics of the Ọjọjọ masquerade festival. Ola Rotimi expresses this condition as a prerequisite for drama in the traditional setting when he tells us that the

> standard acceptation of the term drama, within a cultural setting, at any rate, implies 'an imitation of an action… or of a person or persons in action', the ultimate object of which is to edify or to entertain; sometimes, to do both" (Rotimi 2014, 93).

The kind of imitation that is done in the dramatic enactment within the festival is that of actions within the family in the period of what I may call "communal innocence', despair and triumph. Aristotle believes that imitation in drama is not of persons, "but of actions and of life." According to him,

> well-being and ill-being reside in action, and the goal of life is an activity, not a quality; people posses certain qualities in accordance with their character, but they achieve well-being or its opposite on the basis of how they fare. So the purpose of what the agents do; character is included along with and on account of the actions" (Aristotle 1996, 11).

The plot in the festival is complete and whole. That is, it has a beginning, middle and an end which constitute the standard specification of a "well-constructed plot" as recommended by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. For Aristo-

tle tells us that a "whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end" (Aristotle 1996, 11). The drama in focus begins at the point when the three masquerades enter the arena to perform in order to entertain the spectators/audience. This takes us into the conflict, the point where the child is withdrawn from the arena. This, we can call the middle and then the end, which bestrides the point when the child is found and the triumphant dance that follows.

Furthermore, mime which is a significant aspect of drama is well foregrounded in the festival. In fact, the entire action in the drama is enacted in mimes and gestures. Robin Horton expresses the significance of mime in masquerade enactment thus:

> The masquerade is not intended as the enactment of verbal narrative. Its dominant symbols are those of rhythmic gesture, dictated by the drum; and in so far as its verbal commentaries have a use, it is one of directing attention to the broad area in which the meaning of the dance gestures lies… it is left to the language of dance to fill in the detail which makes the masquerades rich and satisfying to its audience" (Echeruo 2014,168).

Another aspect of the dramatic aesthetics in the Ọjọ-jọ masquerade festival is the use of elaborate costumes. This is done to accentuate the beauty of the various masquerades. The *Ovie-Edjọ*, like other masquerades in

the arena for instance, is lavishly costumed. Its head is costumed with a mask of a finely carved wood variously painted to look like a mermaid. From the head to its knees are clothed with layers of red cloth with flowing red silk scarves. Small gingerly bells are tied around the waist to give a rattling sound as it works – while the ankles are wrapped around with a specially collected rattling shells. The feet are painted with red earth so that when it dances to the rhythm of the drums, hitting the rattles on its ankles with the small machete on its hand, it keeps the spectators enthralled.

Fig 3: A masquerade in vigorous dance display

The masquerade dances by lifting one leg from the ground after the other in a dramatic and synchronised

manner with the drums and the bells around its waist punctuating each movement. Foss explains the significance of the bells and rattles (kernels) to the masquerades dramatic display by saying that "as the dancer drives his legs up and down in the characteristically quick, staccato steps of the edjọtọ dance, these bells and kernels complement the drum patterns that lead the dancer" (Foss 2004, 103). According to him, they play "a crucial role in the final steps of each dancer's display, when he crashes first one, then the other foot to the earth in precise time to the drummer's beat" (Foss 2004, 103). At some point, it sends the spectators roaring by hitting the rattles on its ankles dramatically with the drums answering its gestures to the admiration of the audience. All these are the artistic nuances that make the Ọjọjọ masquerade festival of the Igbudu people of Warri a cultural and dramatic enactment in its own right.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has shown that drama constitutes one of the major artistic goals of masquerade festival in Africa. The masquerade displays, the imitation of human action that is complete in itself, the presence of spectators/audiences, and the elaborate costumes adumbrates the full condiments of drama in its complete sense. The Ọjọjọ festival evaluates the moment of triumphs and achievements of the people, their link with the ancestors and foregrounds, in dramatic representation, in the dramatic sequence of the festival, the

rich cultural and artistic heritage of the African people. We can thus argue that African masquerade festivals are ready mine for drama and theatres. If this is true, therefore, there the need to reclaim, record and store as many of these declining African cultural heritage as a means to preserve them for future generation before they are finally buried by colonial sentiments. Ben Okri enjoins us in this regard to retrieve as many as the African oral traditions that we can recover because "it is not the loss that defines us, but recovery." According to him, one "has to read the clues of what seems to be lost, in art, artefacts, intuitions, dreams. The artist is a conduit through which lost things are recovered" (in Kamalu 2011, 68). In doing this, the recovery must be total in the sense that whatever is recovered should be part of the overall reclamation process of the pristine cultural heritage of the African people. This is necessary because Achebe had warned us, "until the lions produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter" (Achebe 2000, 73).

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Liberation Theology to Evangelicalism: The Rise of Bolsonaro and the Conservative Evangelical Advance in Post-Colonial Brazil

Paul Antonopoulos, Daniel França Ribeiro and Drew Cottle

Introduction

Although Catholicism is presently the dominant religion in Brazil, the Evangelical churches have made significant inroads into the social and political life of Latin American states over the past 30 years. The current strength of the Evangelical churches is immediately visible in contemporary Brazil and they are major commercial crusad-

ers. In 1991, 9% of Brazilians identified as Evangelical while 83% were Catholic (Pena, 2012). In 2010, a joint study by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística and Fundação Getúlio Vargas, found that 20% of Brazilians identified as Evangelical and the number of Catholics had dropped to 68% (Ibid).

The number of Evangelical representatives and senators in politics has continued to increase in state and national political institutions. A survey by the Interunion Parliamentary Advisory Department, concluded that the Evangelical Congress Caucus has increased by 50% since 2008 to 63 representatives out of 513 and three senators out of 81, as of 2012. (Pena, 2012). In 2018, the Catholic-born but re-baptized as Evangelical, Jair Bolsonaro, became the Brazilian President.

Ignoring Brazil's boundaries of race and class, Evangelical churches have successfully penetrated Brazil's favelas, to convert the poorest to their doctrine (Hartropp, 2017). These mass conversions from Catholicism to Evangelism has had a profound impact on Brazilian social and political life. Brazil, the country with the world's largest Catholic population, and Latin America, a region which is synonymous with the Catholic church, are experiencing a mass exodus of people converting to Evangelical churches. The loose structure of these Evangelical churches allows virtually anyone who can read a bible to become a preacher.

Evangelicalism as a conservative strand of Christianity was weaponized by Washington to ensure Brazilians and other Latin Americans become fundamental believers in American culture and free enterprise. More dangerously for the working class however, their variant of evangelicalism promotes individual salvation through material wealth and normalizes the outcomes of American neo-liberal economics.

Weaponization of Evangelicalism against the Latin American Left

Since the end of the 19th century, Latin America had been seen by Washington as its 'Western Hemisphere.' As the global struggle between capitalism and communism during the Cold War intensified in the 1970s, especially after American imperialism's defeat in Vietnam, mass social and armed struggles against American-sponsored regimes arose in Central America, and more broadly throughout Latin America. In the context of these struggles, one response of the Catholic Church was Liberation Theology. Liberation theology was an amalgam of Catholic social justice doctrine and a socialist analysis of impoverished and exploited peoples of the Third World (Aman, 1984-85: 427-438). It was seen by Washington as an ideological threat to American domination of its 'Western Hemisphere.' Liberation theology became a motivating force in the struggle for social and economic liberation. Washington viewed the power of liberation theology as an accomplice of Marx-

ist revolution in Latin America. To meet this challenge to American hegemony in Latin America, Washington turned to the Evangelical churches of America.

A 1969 memorandum sent to US President Richard Nixon, from his Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, a Baptist, stated, "the Catholic church [in Latin America] has ceased to be an ally in whom the US can have confidence" (Elvy, 1987: 98). Rockefeller's strategy to counter the supposed Marxism of the Catholic church's Liberation Theology was to send Protestant missionaries into Latin America.

The use of religious leaders and groups was not a new method for Washington to impose its hegemony across the globe, such as the Catholic church's endorsement of the 1964 Brazilian military coup and the organization of the mujahideen in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 (Krischke, 2007: 403-427; Coll, 2005). The Watergate scandal involving President Nixon led to the formation by the US Senate of the Church Committee, chaired by Senator Frank Church (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1976). The Church Committee attempted to examine the operations and activities of the CIA, mainly because it was caught spying on US citizens (Ibid). The Church Committee report released in 1975 revealed that religious leaders and groups were used by the CIA to undermine the Catholic church in Latin America, but did not get into deep detail as could be expected. It stated,

> The number of American clergy or missionaries used by the CIA has been small. The CIA has informed the Committee of a total of 14 covert arrangements which involved direct operational use of 21 individuals… In six or seven cases, the CIA paid salaries, bonuses, or expenses to the religious personnel, or helped to fund projects run by them. Most of the individuals were used for covert action purposes. Several were involved in large covert action projects of the mid-Sixties, which were directed at "competing" with communism in the Third World (Internet Archive – US Government, 1976).

However, a study by Eric Draitser showed that the "small number" of 21 operatives provided by the CIA were listed as only of "direct operational use." Draitser (2014) argues that the report overlooked the "many [operatives] who may have interacted with the agency through proxies and other third parties, as well as those who, through various front operations, may have not even known that they were working for the agency." He explains that since the report's release in 1975, "the scope and breadth of US covert actions has grown dramatically, encompassing nearly every political, economic, social, technological and cultural sphere" (Ibid). Draitser concludes that the 1975 report "deals exclusively with the CIA. It does not include other intelligence agencies and their various offshoots including the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), State Department with its attendant National Endowment for Democracy (NED), US

Agency for International Development (USAID) and many more" (Ibid). Gerard Colby and Charlotte Dennet in their book *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (1995), explain that Rockefeller used American Evangelical missionaries, and in particular, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, to conduct surveys, transport CIA agents and indirectly assist in the genocide of indigenous tribes in the Amazon basin to serve US corporate interests.

The Rockefeller-supported missionaries' first major religious conversion success occurred in Guatemala when the general and dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt became a Pentecostal church member (Gunson, 2018). Montt used Guatemalan television and radio stations to broadcast the Pentecostal doctrine and denounce the mythical collaboration between the Catholic church and Marxism (Severo, 2018).

In the article, "The First Religious War of the 21st Century," Mike Rivage-Seul argued that "The Rockefeller Report of 1969 already identified liberation theology as a threat to the national security of the United States… The [Reagan] administration heeded the advice, and responded both militarily and ideologically" (Rivage-Seul, 2012). He added, that "As for Reagan's ideological response to liberation theology…. On his accession to power, CIA spy-ops began funding conservative alternatives to liberation theology in Latin America and in the

US so did business concerns that saw the leftward drift of Latin America as a threat to their presence there" (Ibid). With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, efforts to Evangelize Latin America were mostly abandoned and the weaponized Evangelicals are now used to justify war in the Middle East, especially against Iran (Borger, 2019).

The Evangelical theology claims that poverty and drug and alcohol addiction are personal and spiritual failings. In this respect, according to neoliberal dogma, poverty is a symptom of personal failure and not the consequences of the economic system. Many Evangelical churches, like neoliberalism, aggressively oppose government funding to assist the poor. Evangelical theology is congruent with the ideas of neoliberalism and has served as a sort of Trojan horse for its entry into Latin American society through US intelligence agencies, as already explored. Neoliberalism has relied on Evangelicalism to alter Latin American culture and political economy to become more subservient to US ideological hegemony. The entire operation to Evangelize Latin America, spearheaded by the CIA, was to create a culture shift that would undermine the Left-leaning Catholic church and its influence on Latin American people into accepting the free market and US corporate domination.

Evangelical impacts on Brazilian society

The rise of Evangelicalism has significantly impacted Brazilian social life with the tide of conservatism that it

brought to Latin America's largest state. It has brought social and moral issues such as abortion and homosexuality to the forefront of Brazil's political national agenda at the expense of more important political and economic reforms such as taxation and welfare.

Evangelical church services bring charismatic preaching, as well expressive prayer and singing, which are often absent in the liturgical and symbolically rich Catholic church. Whereas the Catholic church remains traditional in its proselytization, Evangelical churches has successfully engaged Brazilian youth, ;articularly through social media. With smartphones becoming increasingly popular and widespread across Brazil, this has meant that social media platforms, accessible in seconds with smartphones, allow the young access to new information and be engaged through new methods (Kath and Knijnik, 2015: 873). Non-gospel music, such as Brazilian funk, afro-reggae and rock, but with Christian lyrics, is also played in some Evangelical churches as a means to attract the youth. Through engagement with this music, the young become evangelised, and are influenced by the church in shaping their social and political views.

As a stratum of petty-bourgeois youth in Brazil's southeastern centres of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, they have become increasingly attracted to the politics of identity (Tisdall, 2018). The Evangelical churches provide a defence of traditional conservative Christian values. Pastor Everaldo in São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, stated that: "We defend life of the human being since

its conception. We defend the Brazilian family. We defend this clearly: marriage is between a man and woman" (Garcia-Navarro, 2014). Homosexual marriage was legalised in Brazil following a Supreme Court decision of May 2013. Evangelicals have mounted a political campaign to reverse this court decision (Boadle, 2018). Jean Wyllys, a homosexual activist affiliated with the Socialism and Liberty Party and a former member of Brazil's parliament, stated that: "But it's a legal precedent that could still be overturned by conservative judges. As long as there is no law, our rights are not protected" (Oualalou, 2014). Some Evangelicals want a new law in which homosexuality is to be 'treated' as a psychological problem (Feder, 2015). The Evangelicals' anti- homosexual campaign may have a major impact on Brazilian youth to not only oppose the gay marriage law but have it replaced by Evangelical-inspired legislation which outlaws' homosexuality and treats it as a medical or psychological disorder (Ibid). Thus increasing numbers of Brazilians are ibeing nfluenced by the message of Evangelical pastors and are gravitating towards conservatism, including the poor and working class (Datafolha, 2017).

This is compunded by the Brazilian Left's turn to the contemporary western liberal norms. The Brazilian working class do not identify with modern Western identity political issues such as the normalization of transgenderism, the normalization of trans-species, etc. (Singal, 2017). The Brazilian workers and the poorest

elements of society are ignored by the petty-bourgeois Left of southeast Brazil who campaign on these afore-mentioned social issues, and abandoned class politics. This has created a conservative reaction which promises to provide jobs and opportunities for the poorest people in Brazil. The Catholic church as a social institution has also effectively ended its mission to uplift the poor. Hervé Théry of the University of São Paulo states that: "The evangelical churches provide a kind of social aid, leisure activities and a genuine listening ear, which the Catholic Church has almost given up doing. It's one of the reasons for their success" (Ibid). This is an admission the National Catholic Reporter had to make (Allen Jr., 2013). The communal aspect of Evangelicalism fills a social void that the state, Brazilian Left and Catholic Church have failed to address. By filling this void, the Evangelical churches have galvanized their followers to support discriminatory policies which are contrary to their class interests.

The favelas of Brazil are massive and permanent squatter settlements inhabited by those forgotten by the Brazilian state and often denied access to healthcare, education, sanitation, transportation or property rights of other Brazilians. The Catholic Church in Brazil was never prepared for this massive influx of the rural poor into the favelas. Millions of rural Brazilians migrated to the cities throughout the 20th century for economic opportunities and metropolitan areas were unable to

provide these new rural migrants with work, housing, food or other essential social services. On the outskirts of many Brazilian cities, these rural migrants established their own makeshift permanent communities in favelas (Eakin, 2017: 91). Life in the favelas was hard, desperate and unpredictable. The urban poor of the favelas became Brazil's underclass. "The government doesn't help us, so God is the only option for the poor," Evangelical Pastor Antonio, a former drug dealer, explained (Arsenault, 2017).

The Evangelical churches claim to help those in the favelas fight against poverty, unemployment, crime, mental health, while also providing education and economic development (Ibid). It is for this reason that the political landscape in Brazil is changing as the poor communities shift to the Right spectrum of politics as the Left have abandoned the class struggle for identity politics and "the Catholics have shown themselves to be incapable," according to Cesar Romero Jacob of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (Oualalou, 2014).

Sometimes these social changes include fundamentalism with violence against non-believers, which is becoming increasingly common in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. The Bandidos Evangélicos (Evangelical Bandits), are born-again Evangelical gangsters from the favelas, who have started a campaign of violence against believers of Umbanda and Candomblé, a religion that fuses Catholicism with African spiritual beliefs. Robert Muggah, research

director of the Igarapé Institute in Rio, explained that "The latest wave of religious-inspired violence can be traced to the turn toward evangelicalism in many parts of Rio de Janeiro, especially low-income settings such as favelas" (Schipani and Leahy, 2017). The large numbers of criminals converting to Evangelicalism have emerged as a body of frontline spiritual soldiers ready to enforce the sect's religious code within the favelas. Their Evangelical zeal may change the fabric of social life in the favelas. Brazil's famous favelas are the home to a unique cultural aspect and where many of Brazil's famous dances, Brazilian funk and afro-reggae music, and arts originated (Resende, Souza and Costa, 2011: 136). How the conservative Evangelical church will affect these unique aspects of Brazilian culture is unknown.

However, the Evangelical churches have attempted to improve social life in the favelas. Evangelical churches have provided basic services such as employment assistance and education to those living in the favelas (Arsenault, 2017). Because of their social interventions in the favelas and the Left's neglect to the needs of the poor, many in the favelas have turned to the Evangelical churches as their saviours.

Many Brazilians feel that their lives have worsened since the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the economy and the moral decline of the Catholic church which is continuously caught up in sex and paedophilia scandals in Latin America (Malzac, 2019). In this context of social and

moral decay, the Evangelical churches offer the certainties of traditional values, the preservation of the family unit and a strong adherence to the literal Bible. However, Rogerio Baptistini of Mackenzie Presbyterian University argues that:

> The growth in evangelical Christianity is taking place without a deep discussion of the values enshrined in our historical character. We are an open and tolerant society, but this sudden growth threatens rationality, the denial of the other, the diverse, the different (Schweimler, 2016).

Baptistini is referring to the Evangelical churches anti-gay stance: and, in the context of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, the killings and beatings of those practising Umbanda and Candomblé. He presents a strong case that the Evangelical church threatens the diversity and difference within Brazilian society. At the political level, the decline of the Left and the resurgence of conservatism is spearheaded by both neoliberal economic forces, and the rapid expansion of the Evangelical churches. The changes in Brazilian society and social life correspond to the changes in its politics.

The Evangelical Church in Brazil: A Business to Exploit the Poor?

The lack of central authority with Evangelical church allows charismatic and engaging individuals with little

knowledge of the bible and no theological training to become preachers who open their own churches, which allows for the church's rapid expansion. Their followers are some of Brazil's poorest people whose generosity and faith they exploit for their own worldly gain, as will be demonstrated.

Pentecostalism is the dominant tendency of the Evangelical churches in Brazil. Its central tenet is that an active presence of God remains in the world and that people, just like Jesus, Peter and Paul, can access this divine power and speak in tongues, banish addictions and heal the sick, and in extreme cases, resurrect the dead (Nzwili, 2019). Armed with the belief in divine intervention and their connection to divine power, Evangelical preachers promise significant material wealth to their poor believers. Evangelical churches offer the slogan "stop suffering," as only faith in God will make you rich, bringing hope to poor Brazilians (Ubags, 2015). This is the basis of the Evangelical prosperity theology.

The prosperity gospel promises the believer that by giving money to their church, praying and adhering to strict social rules such as not drinking alcohol, smoking and having sex outside of marriage, a structured life is created and material rewards will result. Paul Freston, a sociologist and an expert in Pentecostalism in Latin America, stated that: "You learn to see yourself as an agent who has possibilities, who has the ability with God's help to achieve things, to get control of yourself. It doesn't

mean you become rich, but it often means you rise from absolute destitution to dignified poverty" (Bailey, 2017). Although the original Protestant movement in 16th century Catholic Europe arose from Martin Luther's condemnation of the Vatican's power and corruption, the Evangelical promise of personal wealth by donating to its Brazilian churches bears a striking resemblance to the medieval Catholic Church's sale of 'indulgences' for the forgiveness of sins.

A 2013 Forbes report found that prominent Evangelical preachers who advocated the prosperity theology were the richest pastors in Brazil (Antunes, 2013). The report listed Edir Macedo, the founder and leader of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and at the time of the report, having a net worth $950 million (Ibid). Macedo, the author of books criticising Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions owned Brazil's second largest broadcaster, Rede Record; the Folha Universal newspaper; Record News channel; music label companies; several properties; and, a $45 million jet. The funds for these commodities were from the donations made to his church. Macedo is alleged to have siphoned billions of dollars of donations projected for charity; and, has had charges of fraud and money laundering levelled against him (Ibid). Other leading Evangelical preachers are Valdemiro Santiago whose estimated wealth is $220 million; followed by Silas Malafaia with $150 million; Romildo Ribeiro Soares, owning $125 million; and, Es-

tevam Hernandes Filho and his wife Sonia sharing $65 million (Ibid).

Contemporary Brazil is in economic recession, with unemployment at 13% in 2017 and the extreme poverty level at 4.3% and overall poverty at 25% recorded in 2015 (Cascione, 2017). The promise of individual salvation and wealth by donating to the Evangelical church resonates deeply with the poorest in Brazilian society (The World Bank, 2017). A Washington Post report quoted Gabriel Camargo, a Pentecostal pastor with the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, declaring "God will bless you if you give a lot more to the church. You'll have so much money," and providing for individual donations through a credit card payment (Bailey, 2017).

Apart from the promise of great material wealth for donating to the church, some Evangelical churches feature charismatic child preachers. Evangelical Pastor Walter Luz estimates there are thousands (Shapiro, 2015). These children implore congregations to make donations to the church, promote the sale of DVD's of their sermons, CD's of their music and undertake long preaching tours around the world to promote their brand (Ibid). The engagement of charismatic children to promote their spiritual message indicates the commercial purpose of these Evangelical churches where theological study and training are not required of their evangelists.

Although only a minority of the plenitude of Evangelical churches engage in this practice, those which do have turned their churches into billion-dollar businesses and command most Evangelical believers (Antunes, 2013). In contrast, many Evangelical preachers are poor like their followers and hope to make money by opening commercialized churches. Beginning in 2000, as many as 40 new Evangelical churches opened weekly in Rio de Janeiro, according to Roberto Inacio, director of an Assemblies of God Bible institute in Rio (The Gospel Herald, 2003). It is not uncommon in Brazil, such as Vitória in Espírito Santo, to see two Evangelical churches directly next to or opposite each other. This would indicate that with these churches in close proximity to each other, business promotion rather than preaching the word of God is their principal objective.

The immediate material reward in the present life that some Evangelical churches promise, rather than the spiritual afterlife as the Catholic faith offers, is the illusion which draws impoverished Brazilians into the Evangelical fold. Nevertheless, the attractions of consumerism took hold in the favelas. It proved to be the ideal social setting for the message of the Evangelical churches which promised the poor a way to escape from their oppression after their traditional values had failed. Evangelicalism offered them individual salvation and a consumerist lifestyle which would be blessed by God.

The Evangelical leaders through their prosperity theology found true believers in the poor of Brazil.

Leading Pentecostals in the US are critical of the prosperity doctrine promoted by some Evangelicals (Coleman, 2000: 27). In 1980, the General Council of the Assemblies of God stated that prosperity theology overlooked the importance of prayer as the method for requests to God and not simply positive confession (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1980: 5). They concluded that the doctrine only appealed to those in developing states (General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1980: 8). This Pentecostal criticism of the prosperity gospel was made a decade before the tide of Evangelicalism had reached Brazil. Since the 1990s the growth of the Evangelical church has exploded in Brazil, particularly among the impoverished (Pew Research Center, 2013). Whereas in the US Evangelicalism was largely a middle-class social phenomenon, in Brazil the majority of its adherents are poor.

Evangelicalism in Brazilian Politics

Electoral politicians who uphold conservative values against abortion and homosexuality are increasingly aligned with the Evangelical churches which ideologically support them (Bohn 2004, 2007). This electoral trend was demonstrated in the second-round presidential elections of 2002 with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), with

his re-election in 2006 (Ibid) and in the successive victories of Dilma Rousseff (Alessi, 2016), and the election of Bolsonaro to the presidency in 2018. This growing trend demonstrates the influence of Evangelicalism in the electoral successes of the Workers Party (PT) and was symbolized by the presence of Rousseff at the inauguration of the "Temple of Solomon" of the Evangelical Universal Church of the Kingdom of God – in the presence of its religious leader Edir Macedo in 2014 (Sobrinho, 2014; Watts, 2014). Prior to this event, Marcelo Crivella, the mayor of Rio de Janeiro and an Evangelical bishop, was appointed Minister of Fisheries, by Rousseff in 2012 (Boadle, 2013).

The PT's social policies had an initial affinity with elements of the Evangelical doctrine. The PT attempted to address the needs of the faithful and the poor who in the absence of state action sought solutions to the problems of income, employment, education, health and family stability (Bohn, 2004; Potter et al., 2014). However, the Evangelicals withdrew their political support for any political representative charged with corruption and dishonesty and when the anti-corruption operations against targeted politicians began, the Evangelicals withdrew their support for leading corrupt PT politicians.

The investigations into the corruption of leading political figures led to a crisis of legitimacy in the Brazilian State. In response to these revelations of high corrup-

tion, the Evangelicals have mobilized politically with Mario Crivella elected as the mayor of Rio de Janeiro. His mayoral victory represents not only a political consolidation of Evangelicals, in the legislative branch, but also in executive power. In the context of this legitimacy crisis, the Evangelicals, have benefitted politically as there is a popular rejection of traditional political class from the Left and the Right, as well as secular representation itself. (Janoni, 2016).

In this sense, what is observed is the consolidation of a vacuum of power that was affected by the evident absence of political options, precipitated by the moderate Left's involvement in institutionalised corruption. This affected its own legitimacy and led to the subsequent takeover of this empty political space by those who supposedly express interest in a population already abandoned by the state.

It can be argued that there is the weight and responsibility of the moderate Left, where it showed a political accommodation with the Evangelicals, whose potential for political mobilization could change Brazilian elections (Bohn, 2007). Political Evangelicalism may even find an affinity with Catholics in a supra-religious and non-liberal agenda, directed towards an economic statism linked to anti-abortion and anti-homosexual moral agenda (Bohn, 2004).

In Brazilian national policy, Crivella may represent the reflection of an Evangelical beginning. Evangelicals by their religious agenda in politics, allow the fall of a mask and reveal the true face of a national mentality, which qualifies as difficult to accept institutional and social changes. And the true face is Christian moralism, which is presently beyond the scope of individual religious beliefs, and expresses a notion of society that has not yet allowed itself to reflect clearly on its values. The inclusion of Evangelicals in the political agenda, in this sense, opens an opportunity for reflection.

Moreover, Crivella's election also reflects a natural tendency of representativeness and legitimacy at the appropriate time from a significant population niche that until then had been abandoned by the state and by the social patterns of the Left and the traditional creeds - not to mention the decadence of legitimacy in the absence of identity of the last governments that sought a relative approximation.

The reflection of this is the approximation of the population in another social meander, not only in religion, but also in the intricacies of the bureaucratic apparatuses of the State. Opportunities for the Evangelical population are reflected, no longer in the close nuclei of each citizen, but in the generic scope of broader applications of possible public policies. And the induction is not because of the specific condition of the Evangelical

churches, but with the significant role of the Left, by the acceptance of the Evangelical vote and subsequent participation in their governments, as well as by the moralistic reinforcement of Catholicism and other creeds of traditional conservatism.

President Bolsonaro: Brazil's Evangelical Champion

Bolsonaro, an ultra-conservative former military officer-turned-politician, capitalized on the fall of the PT. With 54% of Brazilians holding a conservative view according to a 2016 survey (Almeida, 2017), the continued Liberal Left attack on traditional values saw voters turn to Bolsonaro as their defender. Out of all of Brazil's Christian sects, the Evangelicals were the most ardent supporters of Bolsonaro with nearly 70% of them voting for him (Machado, 2018).

His denominational allegiance remains a mystery in Brazil. He was born a Catholic and has never renounced Catholicism but he was videoed being baptized in the Jordan River by Pastor Everaldo - a prominent leader of the Assembly of God and the head of the Christian Social Party who also ran for President in 2014 - in May 2016 (Smith and Lloyd, 2018). This symbolic act coupled with his ultra-conservatism, was enough for Bolsonaro to garner the overwhelming support from this powerful minority bloc. Whether he identifies as Evangelical, or

made the move to gain a powerful minority vote, his presidential election demonstrates a significant political-cultural shift in Brazil. In the fourteen years before Bolsonaro's presidency, Brazil was governed by a progressive Leftist party which supported identity politics and continually challenged the natural Christian conservatism of the country (Lero and Bello, 2015).

To galvanize the political support of the Evangelicals, Bolsonaro promised to move the Brazilian Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He made it one of his main policy goals by continually mentioning this on the presidential election campaign trail (The Guardian, 2019). Brazilian Evangelicals were elated by this Bolsonaro promise. The Evangelicals believe that there will be a future golden age when Jesus Christ returns to reign on Earth. Before Christ's return there would be a time of tribulation where Christ defeats evil; only after natural disasters, wars and the Antichrist devastate the world (Illing, 2018). After these tribulations, the Evangelicals believe that the people of the Mosaic covenant, including the Jews who will convert to Christianity, will bring forth the golden age (Ibid). Evangelicals hold the belief that when the Jewish people reclaim the Holy Land, that the world will move closer to the second coming of Christ. Evangelicals have been described as Christian Zionists, as they have supported the expansionist drive of the state of Israel in the Palestinian Occupied Territories and the annexed Golan Heights region of Syria.

For Christian Zionists, these actions represent the Jewish reclamation of the Holy Land.

One of Bolsonaro's first statements after becoming President-Elect was to announce the relocation of Brazil's embassy in Israel, "As previously stated during our campaign, we intend to transfer the Brazilian Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Israel is a sovereign state and we shall duly respect that." The Bolsonaro announcement followed US President Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. In a later statement, Bolsonaro threatened to close the Palestinian Embassy in the Brazilian capital, saying: "Is Palestine a country? Palestine is not a country, so there should be no embassy here," and "We do not negotiate with terrorists" (Donati, 2018). These statements were immediately endorsed by Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Zion, 2019). Bolsonaro refuted Brazil's long-standing neutrality on the question of Palestine.

The Brazilian embassy move has not happened as many within Bolsonaro's party, including Vice President Hamilton Mourão, as well as the powerful Agricultural Ministry, opposed the move, arguing that it would significantly harm trade relations with Arab countries (Antonopoulos, 2019). Their opposition was announced after Arab states threatened to stop Brazilian imports if the embassy was relocated to Jerusalem. In 2017, Brazil had a $419

million trade deficit with Israel compared to a $7.1 billion surplus with the 22 states of the Arab League – accounting for 10% of Brazil's total trade surplus (Douglas and Freitas, 2018).

Although Bolsonaro was unsuccessful in moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he found great success in presenting himself as a defender of social conservatism. With Evangelicals taking a strong position over issues of life, family, sexuality, gender roles and faith, they believe Bolsonaro will mobilize Brazilians to defend their faith and moral values. As the majority of Brazilians claim to hold conservative values, Bolsonaro has mobilized communities around moral and social issues. Bolsonaro has brought religion and morality to the forefront of Brazils' political and public life, something that was especially lacking under the PT government.

Bolsonaro's verbal attacks against ethnic minorities, homosexuals and Marxists, highlights the insecurities of Evangelicals who felt threatened by the liberal political and social order that emerged under the PT government. Bolsonaro's alignment to the Evangelical vision has meant that specific religious factors dominate Brazilian domestic and foreign policy in what has been historically an exemplary secular state (Winter, 2019). Although Bolsonaro has not renounced Catholicism, his wife and children are Evangelical, and his strong endorsement of Israel has confirmed him as an Evangelical political champion.

Conclusion

The explosive growth of Evangelicalism in Brazil is unprecedented and not evident anywhere else in the world. Evangelicalism is predicted to be the majority religion in Brazil by 2030 and will become a political and social juggernaut (Hennigan, 2013). Evangelical adherents collectively can influence politicians and use broadcast and social media, to promote their conservative values. After Catholicism was forced upon the people of Latin America by the Iberian colonists, it had faced no threat to its religious dominance until the rapid advance of contemporary Evangelicalism.

The Evangelical leadership has successfully changed the lives of millions of Brazilians by influencing the ways they dress, what they eat, the music they listen to, and the candidates they vote for in elections. Evangelicals are encouraged to vote only for Evangelical candidates. As they are projected to become the religious and political majority, it can only be expected that the world's first openly Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal president will be in Brazil. Bolsonaro has not renounced his Catholicism and was only recently baptized by an Assembly of God pastor.

The Evangelical influence will be felt in society if it successfully dominates Brazilian politics. The recent changes in Brazilian society, the legalization of same

sex marriage, the debate over the decriminalization of drugs, safe-sex education in schools and the distribution of clean and unused needles to drug addicts, will be challenged or reversed by the rising tide of Evangelical conservatism under the Bolsonaro administration. The most direct issue that the Evangelical church must resolve is its loose structure where some of its ministries allow children and people with no theological training to preach and/or open their own churches. Although this in itself is not necessarily bad, the exploitation of children must be closely monitored.

More importantly, the loose structure must be consolidated so that churches that preach prosperity theology can be closed and exposed for their false doctrine interpretations. This remains one of the most immediate issues to the Evangelical church brand in Brazil and the source for one of its greatest criticisms, despite the attraction it has to the poor. The social assistance carried out by the Evangelical church for Brazil's impoverished, particularly in the favelas, has a specific political purpose: to win followers to its doctrine and program. In the favelas, the Evangelical church relies on its petty criminal foot soldiers to attack the followers of Afro-Brazilian religions.

What is certain however is that with the rise of the Evangelical church, it is inevitable that it will become a social and political force in Brazil. How Brazilian soci-

ety integrates this phenomenon in its entirety cannot be predicted. In the short term, under the Bolsonaro presidency, the Evangelical church will continue to deepen its influence over Brazilians and convert its mass following among the poor towards conservatism.

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Review of Matthew's Shum's Improvisations of Empire : Thomas Pringle in Scotland, the Cape Colony and London, 1789-1834 *, Anthem Press, 2020, pp 225, ISBN-13: 978-1-78527-378-0(Hbk), £, 80, $125.*

Dhrubajyoti Banerjee

One of the major ways in which identity, individual or collective, is forged, is through memory and the way in which documented memory expresses itself is history. For literary artists, the historian has to award spaces to the figure, both as an artist and as an individual. So the biographer and the traditional Historian of Literature,

both attempt to deal with the artist in related but separate ways. In his book *Improvisations of Empire*, Matthew Shum tries to do just that as he attempts to critically analyse the life and works of Thomas Pringle. Pringle, we are told, occupies a place of eminence and privilege in the South African literary canon and his work concerns various aspects of South Africa. His reputation rests primarily on how he represented the African space and went on to voice concerns about racial tolerance and freedom of the press. But how far his writings succeed in lending a voice to the people and the country is what the book tries to look into. Is the space that Pringle occupies in the history of South African Writing, one that he is justified in holding? Is there a need for re-assessment of his position? These are some of the questions that this book will lead the readers to ask.

The sub-title of the book reads *Thomas Pringle in Scotland, the Cape Colony and London, 1789-1834*. Shum, in this extensively researched study looks at Pringle from the point of view of the historian as well as that of a literary critic. His poems, prose writings are perceptively read and analysed in order to give him a space in the history of the colonial world as well as that of South Africa. The sub-title highlights how Pringle engaged with three regional spaces and how they helped to create some of his most interesting pieces of work. The time frame is also very interesting. The year 1789 marked the beginning of the French Revolution and the Romantic Age

is literature is accepted to have continued till the 1830's. Pringle thus lived and worked in the Romantic Era but the nineteenth century was simultaneously the period of Colonial engagements and his writings show the highly nuanced and sometimes complicated negotiations with both these literary and historical currents.

The book *Improvisations of Empire* is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 deals with Thomas Pringle's engagements with and in 'Scotland'. Chapter 2 locates him in 'The Eastern Cape Frontier'. Chapter 3 looks at his life and times in 'Cape Town and Beyond'. Chapter 4 finds him in 'London'. In each of these studies we find Pringle as an individual who is, in the words of Shum, 'a person in transit between different national spaces and also between different sets of formative influences' (Shum 2020, 1). The dialogue between Scottish and English Romanticism is found to yield some very interesting results. So also, the position and negotiation between being a settler in South Africa and lending voice to the rights of the natives, the relations between the European and the indigenous people become fertile areas which are analysed beautifully by Shum. What is interesting is that literary theory often tries to level out specificities in an attempt to establish the operation of its premises. In depth archival research and meticulous analysis of texts show how these larger binaries of the Colonizer / Colonized, the Self and the Other, the West and the Rest need to be thoroughly re-assessed in the context of spe-

cific historical moments. Matthew Shum tries to do just that. He engages with theory but does so critically and hints at conclusions which cannot be very simplistically expressed. Shum clarifies that though his study is on the whole chronological it should not be construed that he suggests a linear development in the writings of Pringle. On the other hand there are movements back and forth and the presence of a considerable degree of intertwining lends richness if not interesting complications to the works of Pringle.

Shum tries to use Romantic theory in his analysis of the texts of Pringle to a large extent. Conceptual intricacies such as the differences between the 'sublime' the 'beautiful' and the 'picturesque' are used to read Pringle's poems. In Chapter 1, in the study of poems written in and on Scotland, Shum notes a mismatch between the Scottish landscape that is portrayed and the tools, mainly derived from English Romantic poetry, which are used in those descriptions. The problems he faced in representing the 'gipsy' in the Scottish poems is resolved by making them part of the picturesque and this was later to become one of the basic ways of engagement with indigenous people of South Africa.

In his analysis of the period in the Eastern Frontier of Cape Colony, in Chapter 2 of the book, Pringle is represented as a figure troubled by insecurities inherent in the Colonial enterprise. His concerns about social hier-

archies and the need for reform and conversion of the indigenous population need to be placed in the context of potential material threats that the colonial personages faced from the tribal groups. Shum argues that there were contingencies in the ground situations which led to adjustments and sweeping generalisations regarding the idealistic bent of Pringle's thoughts need to be qualified and put in proper perspective.

The third chapter of the book looks at Pringle as a journalist and point to how 'Pringle's Scottish and imperial heritages played into his perception of how a nascent colonial civil society should evolve' (Shum 2020, 4). It was in this period of his life that he wrote poems where the indigenous characters are found to highlight the negative effects of colonial rule. We also learn that this was a troublesome period of his life when he fell out of favour with the persons in power and he also started thinking about humanitarian causes. How far his poems and other writings are products of the colonial gaze and how far they are sincere in their attempt to give space to the subaltern is open to interpretation. His actions in real life and the treatment of characters in art do not always go hand in hand. But this is not to label him as a hypocrite. Shum tries to put in intensive and detailed analysis to represent the enormous complexity of the life and times, complexities that are not always addressed in sweeping theoretical generalizations.

The fourth and final chapter of the book deals with

Pringle's time in London when his position regarding the colonial enterprise underwent significant changes. His writings reveal in the words of Shum, 'an inherent instability and a tendency toward repeated contrariety or contradiction' (Shum 2020, 7).

The entire study contains detailed and minute analysis of many poems of Pringle. Some of the texts analysed include : 'Evening Rambles', 'Afar in the Desert' 'The Song of the Wild Bushman', 'Makanna's Gathering', 'The Bechuana Boy', 'The Honeybird and the Woodpecker'. 'The Caffer Commando' and 'The Desolate Valley'. Along with these his prose work, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* is also used for in depth analysis. His editorial enterprise in *The History of Mary Prince* is also used by Shum to describe the complex nature of Pringle's engagements with contemporary colonial politics and how the abolitionist agenda came within all of this.

Another aspect worth noting in this study is the way in which Shum has expressed his views on possible revisions that Pringle had made to lines and passages in his earlier work in order to suit them to the new and altered perspectives that he had on the situations later in life.

These in depth studies do not suggest that Shum is not willing to use theoretical premises in his writings. His work is replete with reference to theorists such as Je-

rome McGann, Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak not to speak of earlier thinkers like Adam Smith and others. But he tries to use these terms and concepts only as starting points and in most of the cases, these theoretical premises tend to be qualified by the specific research that Shum undertakes.

Every serious act of literary criticism is also an act of reading the contemporary times of the critic into the texts that he is reading. This is not to suggest that critics are unable to look into the past and the ethos that made the artist write the way he did. However, the relevance of an artist of the past in present times is one of the main reasons why revisionist studies are undertaken. Shum feels that the figure of Thomas Pringle needs re-assessment in the contemporary times. This leads him on to complete his intensive and extensive research on Pringle. Shum clarifies his position in the concluding paragraph of his Introduction to the book. He says that an element of uncertainty dominates South African experience when excesses of European colonization and its continued, although disguised, existence are being put up on trial. In this context, Shum says, Pringle's work can be looked upon, 'as a complex resource for the embattled present rather than as a relic of the colonial past' (Shum 2020, 7). He ends the book with a very interesting turn of phrase as he adds that 'our obligation is to find a way of remembering him that is also a way of letting him go' (Shum 2020, 212).

Note on Contributors
(in order of appearance)

Cecile Sandten is Professor of English Literatures at Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany. She is the author of a monograph about the Indian poet Sujata Bhatt (1998) and *Shakespeare's Globe, Global Shakesepares* (2015). She has published widely on Indian English poetry, the representation of the (postcolonial) metropolis, conceptualisations of 'home', detective fiction, or asylum account and refugees.

Ariktam Chatterjee is an Assistant Professor of English at the Government General Degree College, Singur, Hooghly. He has done his Ph.D. from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, on the History of Bible Translation in Bengali. Translation, cultural studies, semiotics and Renaissance Studies are his areas of interest.

Arzoo Saha is pursuing her Ph.D. thesis on the 'Origin and Nature of Indian Rap' under the supervision of Prof. Meenakshi Malhotra from the University of Delhi. She teaches English at Ramanujan College in Delhi. Her academic interests are Popular Culture, Postcolonial theory and Literature and Modernism.

Gorica Majstorovic is Professor of Spanish and Co-ordinator of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Stockton University. She is currently completing a book manuscript on the interwar Latin American literature and the Global South and co-editing, with Axel Gasquet, a collected volume on literary interactions between Latin America and Asia.

Paul Veyret is Senior Lecturer at Bordeaux Montaigne University. He is the co-editor of *Desi*, a pluridisciplinary journal on aspects of the South Asian diaspora. He has published on contemporary British, Pakistani, and Indian fiction, and Pakistani and Indian cinema.

Samar H. Aljahdali is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). She received her PhD from Exeter University (2014). Her research interests include postcolonial theory and literature and cultural studies.

Catherine Brown-Robison is a graduate of Marquette University, having received her master's degree in English Literature in 2019, preceding her bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. Her primary area of focus is in postcolonial literatures, specifically those that engage with and pertain to authorial hybridity.

Lava Asaad is a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at Auburn University. She received her doctoral degree from Middle Tennessee State University. She is the author of *Literature with a White Helmet: The Textual-Corporeality of Being, Becoming and Representing Refugees* (Routledge).

Peter E. Omoko is a playwright/scholar who teaches African oral literature, creative writing, African and European literatures at the Department of English, Delta State College of Education, Mosogar Delta State-Nigeria and whose research interest focuses on translation, fieldwork/folklore studies, popular songs and African drama. He has published in a wide range of scholarly journals and books.

Paul Antonopoulos is the Director of the Center for Research on Multipolarity and a Research Fellow at the Center for Syncretic. His main research interests are the international relations and political economy of the Middle East and Latin America, as well as multipolarity and anti-imperialism.

Daniel França Ribeiro is doing a Postgraduate Degree in Public Law at Unyleya in Brazil. He is a graduate of Law at Centro Universitário de Brasília and Political Science at the Universidade de Brasília. His main research interests are the international relations and political economy of BRICS and multipolar geopolitics.

Drew Cottle is senior lecturer in History and Politics at Western Sydney University. His research interests include revolutionary and post-colonial struggles, and multipolarity.

Dhrubajyoti Banerjee teaches English at New Alipore College, Kolkata. An alumnus of Presidency College, he went on to complete his Masters, M.Phil. and Doctoral Research from Jadavpur University. His areas of interest and research include Indian Writing in English, Travel Writing, Translation, Literary Theory, Literature and Films etc. He lives in Kolkata.