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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

REWRITING EMPIRE: REWRITING CANONICAL BRITISH TEXTS FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By
JENNIFER ANNE MCCLINTON
Norman, Oklahoma
2001

UMI Number: 3004873



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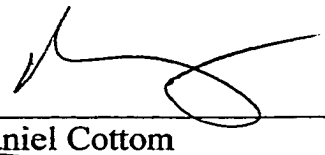
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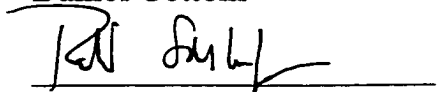
REWRITING EMPIRE: REWRITING CANONICAL BRITISH TEXTS FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY



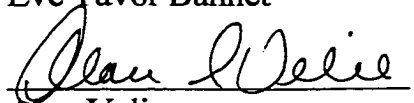
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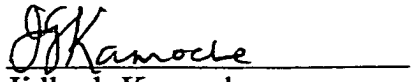
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lynn R. McClinton and Anne Hawks McClinton. Together, they taught me to love reading and were my most enthusiastic supporters. Although they have been gone since the beginnings of my college career, I could not have accomplished this goal without them.

I would like to thank my committee, Dan Cottom, Ron Schleifer, Alan Velie, Eve Bannet, and Jid Kamoche for being both challenging and encouraging.

I would like to thank my husband, Patrick Temple, for being such an inspiring and devoted partner in our shared lives.

I would also like to thank my son, Cavan Temple. Being his mother has given me a sense of confidence and courage I would not have thought possible.

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Abstract

Re-writing and re-reading traditional European texts from a post-colonial position is a powerful method of dramatizing the oppositional relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. By using Western canonical texts to rewrite, write back to, or write through the European canon, post-colonial writers can foreground the experiences, the history, and the culture of the once dominated society while at the same time recognizing the effects colonization has had in shaping and reshaping them. Appropriating works such as *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Jane Eyre* allows post-colonial writers to treat the European literary tradition in a variety of ways. They may undermine it, appropriate it, or venerate it, but in any case they will not lose their own subjectivity in the process.

In this dissertation, I examine several postcolonial texts that rewrite or revise an earlier English work. My objective here is to uncover the reasons why this is such a popular method of writing for postcolonial authors and how those reasons are revealed. Postcolonial rewrites work because they are able to accept the influence of English literature on native culture. At the same time, they reject stereotypes or misrepresentations that might have been created by that literature. In addition, these rewrites open up the earlier work for alternative readings that have the potential to change forever the way the first work is interpreted and received. Pairs of works I examine include Wole

Soyinka's *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* (1979) and John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1720), Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), Robertson Davies's *Tempest-tost* (1951), George Lamming's *Water with Berries* (1973) and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1967) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1837), Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1978) and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861). I also examine several poems be William Butler Yeats in terms of how they rewrite Celtic myths and how that project compares to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, itself a rewrite of Homer's *The Odyssey*.

Preface

This project came into being several years ago, beginning with a paper on several postcolonial versions of *The Tempest* that I was writing for a class. An important realization occurred to me during that time that made me see the potential of the topic of rewriting. Although I had read Robertson Davies's novel *Tempest-tost* (1951) before, I had not thought of it as a *rewrite* of Shakespeare's play. As I began to research the topic of rewriting, focusing on George Lamming's 1973 version of *The Tempest, Water with Berries*, I remembered having read the Davies novel. I realized that one of the reasons I had not thought of it as a rewrite was because when I read it the first time, I had not read *The Tempest*. However, the figure of the outsider character and the allusions to freedom and artistic expression being contained by an outside force were not lost on me as themes from Shakespeare's play—the play the community theater in the novel is presenting. These references got through to me although I had not read the earlier play because, as Davies correctly assumes, the characters of Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban are part of our vocabularies as readers. This is true in part because literature has, since the mid-nineteenth century, been a tool not only for imparting cultural literacy, but also for exhorting cultural power. Nowhere has this been more important than in the imperial context.

In J.G. Ballard's novel, *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), which dramatizes the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the British stationed in Krishnapur find themselves forced to abandon their "civilizing" mission and to physically defend themselves. As their line of defense weakens, they begin to use non-traditional items—furniture, pianos, books—to shore up their fragile walls. Because many of these items are representative of high Victorian culture, these walls are both literal and figurative. As the attacks continue, accompanied by starvation and disease, the ideal logy behind their vision of universal progress begins to fade away. It is at this point that they bring out the electroplated heads of English poets to use as ammunition. As cannonballs, the heads work well, particularly Shakespeare:

> Without a doubt the most effective missiles in this matter of improvised ammunition had been the heads of this electrometal figures . . . And of the heads . . .the most effective of all had been Shakespeare's; it had scythed its way through a whole astonished platoon of sepoys advancing in single file through the jungle. The Collector suspected that the Bard's success in this respect might have had a great deal to do with the ballistic advantages stemming from his baldness. The head of Keats, for example, wildly festooned with metal locks . . . had flown very erratically indeed. (335)

This passage, with its poets being used quite literally to bring down Indians, makes a serious point about the power of literature in the imperial enterprise. In *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Gauri Viswanathan shows that the very beginnings of the institutionalized study of English literature can be traced to early nineteenth-century colonial India. This literature was used, she says, not only to communicate the model Englishman to the Indians, but also, especially after the 1835 English Education Act that required all Indians to participate in the English education system, to convey "universal truths" and "Christian principles." This is why Keats, a Romantic poet, is not as effective as Shakespeare as a weapon of destruction. With Romanticism's emphasis on the regional and its celebration of individualism, such a poet could not be as effective a tool of colonization.

My own experience, reading *Tempest-tost* for the first time without first-hand knowledge of *The Tempest,* demonstrated for me just how powerful and lasting a weapon Shakespeare turned out to be. The characters, plots, and themes of Shakespeare's plays and other classic works of English literature are so significant in terms of the way Western culture is understood that often one does not actually have to have actually read the work in question to be familiar with it. When these same elements of Western culture also define the way in which we understand *others*, those who are only described by the literature,

taking the tools in hand to rebuild that description personally can be a powerful and satisfying method of self-representation for postcolonial authors.

In this dissertation, I examine several postcolonial texts that rewrite or revise an earlier English work. My objective here is to uncover the reasons why this is such a popular method of writing for postcolonial authors and how those reasons are revealed in each of the works I discuss. I believe that postcolonial rewrites work so well because they are able to accept the influence of English literature on the native culture. At the same time, they reject the stereotypes or misrepresentations that might have been created by that literature. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, these rewrites open up the earlier work for alternative readings that have the potential to change forever they way the first work is interpreted and received.

In Chapter One, I examine the act of rewriting in order to show how revising another's work is a task that simultaneously looks back into the past and forward into the future. For any group struggling under the domination of another, revising the texts of that dominant society is a method of resistance that Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls the "decolonization of the narrative" (112). It is an active form of resistance that for postcolonial authors is especially attractive, given the importance of literary education in the colonial school system. Postcolonial authors may often feel as though they have only been *described*, and this is their opportunity to turn the tables of description.

However, as I point out in this chapter, postcolonial rewriting is not merely the reversal of binary oppositions that might appear in the first work. It is a far more multivalent task. Postcolonial rewrites can also honor the first work, acknowledging it for its influence and significance in the canon. At the same time that they perform this acknowledgement, these texts can also reject the ideology of the first text, whether that ideology has to do with race, gender, religion, nationalism, or imperialism, in order to illuminate problems inherent in that ideology. To demonstrate how this works, in Chapter One I analyze a text that is not strictly in opposition to the original text, Wole Soyinka's *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* (1979), a rewrite of John Gay's 1728 play *The Beggar's Opera*. In *Òpèrá Wónyòsi*, Soyinka uses Gay's character and plot to satirize Nigerian society during the post-independence oil boom of the 1970s. In *The Beggar's Opera*, Gay also satirized the society of his time, in this case the corruption of the emergent nation-state of Britain in the 1720s. In this respect, Soyinka acknowledges the influence of Gay's play as a political satire and its significance in subverting the dominant ideology of the day. However, through his transformation of the character Polly, Soyinka links his play to Gay's sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, *Polly* (1729), as well. *Polly* is set the colonial West Indies, and by tying all three plays together, Soyinka illuminates the influence European culture and imperialism have had in creating the inequitable class system of post-independence Nigeria. In this chapter, I also

show how Soyinka's play injects a black presence into readings of the first play, opening up for examination an area Gay neglected to explore.

In Chapter Two, I discuss three versions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, demonstrating how geographical differences, along with different colonial and postcolonial experiences, tend to affect the degree to which texts are rewritten. The Indian version, Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), merely alludes to *The Tempest*, taking from it certain characterizations and plot elements but never making the connection between the two works explicit. This method reflects the postcolonial desire to acknowledge the colonial past, yet at the same time show mastery over it. In the Canadian version, *Tempest-tost*, by Robertson Davies, a community theater is putting on a production of *The Tempest*. The novel pays homage to the simplicity of Shakespeare's brilliance while at the same time showing, through the use of allegory, how settler colonies such as Canada need to develop their own art rather than rely on the art of the mother country. In the Caribbean version, *Water with Berries*, by George Lamming, the plot is ripped apart and reassembled to show a devastating portrait of the effects of racism and stereotyping on people of color in the British Empire. Lamming believes that characterizations such as that of Caliban played a large role in this stereotyping.

In Chapter Three, I examine more closely how the issue of race affects rewriting by analyzing two postcolonial works concerned with race,

Pantomime (1978) by Derek Walcott and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1967) by Jean Rhys. In *Pantomime*, a version of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the two characters in the modern text reverse roles as they rehearse a pantomime performance of Defoe's story. Despite the fact that they are merely rehearsing, and despite the fact that Harry, the white character, declares the pantomime a farce, the differences in their conceptions of racial difference and the residual effects of colonialism prove insurmountable in the end. However, Walcott's version of the Crusoe story does not simply lay the blame for imperialism and racism at the feet of authors like Defoe; instead, through its complex construction of both characters and their relationship, it inspires us to read Defoe's novel more carefully in terms of race in order to see how all four characters, Crusoe, Friday, Harry, and Jackson, conceive of themselves racially only in relation to others. In other words, Walcott shows us that our ideas about race, even about our own race, are socially constructed. In a place like the Caribbean, where a stable indigenous culture does not exist, these ideas are quite complicated for all races.

The other text I discuss in Chapter Three is also from the Caribbean. In my examination of *Wide Sargasso Sea* I focus on Antoinette/Bertha's creole identity and how her difficulty in establishing a place either in the black island culture or the English culture led to her suicide, both in *Wide Sargasso Sea* itself and in the first book in which a version of this character appeared,

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1837). Through an examination of race relations and history in the Caribbean, Rhys's own feelings on the subjects of race and identity, and Antoinette's ambivalence about race, I argue that Rhys constructs a specifically Creole identity for Antoinette, neither black nor white, neither British nor Caribbean. This identity, in turn, changes the way we read *Jane Eyre* by forcing us to look at the ways Brontë constructs race and othering in her novel.

In Chapter Four, I examine three novels concerned with nationalism and nation-building, all of which are rewrites of previous works. The first, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), takes as its foundation certain elements of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759). While this text is not strictly a rewrite of the earlier novel, the similarities in plot, narrative structure, and tone imply a link between the rise of nationalism in England in the eighteenth century, when Sterne wrote, and the rise of nationalism in India in the twentieth, the time that Rushdie describes. I also discuss Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) in relation to James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Both novels have as one of their central concerns the role of religion both in imperialism and in the formation of national identity. Rushdie echoes scenes from the life of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in order that he might compare Ireland's postcolonial state to that of India's. He does this to demonstrate how the unquestioning devotion to a religion by a colonized

people can strengthen the bonds of imperialism and ultimately lead to separatist violence and the politicizing of that religion.

Also included in Chapter Four is an analysis of Peter Carey's novel, *Jack Maggs* (1997). In this novel, Carey rewrites the story of Abel Magwitch, the convict from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861). I discuss Carey's novel in light of Australian national culture and the extent to which that national culture is dependent on the image of the Australian convict, the transportee from England of which Dickens's Magwitch is a famous example. I argue here that Australian national culture is, in part, derived from the experience of the early arrivals to its shores, many of them petty thieves who were part of a "criminal class" in their native England. Jack has overcome the burdens placed on him by the English class system. He has served his time and has become successful in Australia—yet he wants nothing more than to be recognized as an *Englishman*, and to deny he belongs to the Australian "race."

Chapter Five, which includes analyses of works from two major Irish artists, W.B.Yeats and James Joyce, departs a bit from the structure of the other chapters. Here, I examine Yeats's rewritings of Ireland's own myths, rather than the myths of the colonizer. Yeats's goal in doing this was to create a "unity of culture" for Ireland that would transcend politics. I argue, though, that he could not meet this goal, primarily because he was searching for a purity that did not exist, especially in the hybrid state modern Ireland found

itself in at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yeats was not just an Irish poet, but also an Anglo-Irish one, and his transformation of the Celtic legends did little more in the way of creating a national culture than to Anglicize those legends.

Joyce, on the other hand, turns to a text canonized not just by the English but also by all of Western civilization, Homer's *The Odyssey*. In using this text as the structural foundation for *Ulysses*, Joyce successfully distances Ireland from England by placing it in a European context, but he also questions the received notions of history and culture delivered by all canonical texts in a move that reflects Ireland's postcolonial state. I argue that it is because of Joyce's recognition of this state that he chooses this method of rewriting and explicitly criticizes Yeats's method. Published in 1924, *Ulysses* can be seen as a kind of blueprint for the intertextual postcolonial rewrites that would follow it and which I discuss in this dissertation.

Chapter I: Writing and Rewriting

As has now been widely recognized, re-writing and re-reading traditional European texts from a post-colonial position is a powerful method of dramatizing the oppositional relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. By using Western canonical texts to rewrite, write back to, or write through the European canon, post-colonial writers can foreground the experiences, the history, and the culture of the once dominated society while at the same time recognizing the effects colonization has had in shaping and reshaping them. Rewriting the canon offers several possibilities for post-colonial writers. First, and perhaps most obvious, is the opportunity to reverse, or perhaps just problematize, the subject and object positions of the original text. Writing from the point of view of the Other, or the colonized, creates a new vision of colonialism and its effects. Second, rewriting, or writing back to, a canonical text allows the post-colonial writer to acknowledge the debt that is owed to the hegemonic European literary tradition. This is not to suggest that this "debt" was acquired either willingly or to positive effect. However, many post-colonial writers received educations that stressed the traditional English canon, and to reject these texts entirely would be to reinforce their hegemony by implying a clear demarcation between the culture of the colonizer and the culture of the colonized. Such a demarcation inevitably sets up a binary opposition between the two—with the established, traditional,

older texts setting the standard by which the more radical, newer texts would be measured. This recognition then brings us to a third possibility in rewriting the canon. Using traditional Western texts as a foundation or an inspiration can allow modern post-colonial writers to illustrate the hybridity of their cultures without either favoring the European tradition or ignoring it. The appropriation of works such as *The Tempest*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or *Jane Eyre* as the occasion for a work allows post-colonial writers to treat the European literary tradition in a variety of ways. They may undermine it, appropriate it, or venerate it, but in any case they will not lose their own subjectivity in the process.

Rewriting as opposed to merely *writing* is significant for post-colonial authors because in many ways they have themselves been "written." In Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which contains echoes of several works by James Joyce, one Indian character explains to another about the English , "They describe us . . . That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (168). For authors who choose to grapple with these descriptions, the possibilities for meaningful, complex, accurate descriptions open up in historically telling ways that are impossible with wholly "new" texts that might appear to reject the colonial past outright.

For these reasons, writers in colonial or post-colonial situations all over the world are drawn to the practice of rewriting, retelling, revising, and

resituating old stories so that the new versions are more applicable to their experiences and lives as postcolonial writers, artists, and people[1]. This phenomenon is more than just a series of simple homages, postcolonial nods to colonial educations--although such homages do occur. It is more than just turning the story upside-down, with the villains and the heroes changing places and destinies--although such reversals do occur as well. It is also more than a matter of changing the point-of-view character and telling the tale through the eyes of a supporting, or marginalized player--although we see a fair amount of that technique as well. The phenomenon I discuss here covers, obviously, a wide range of techniques, forms, and "levels" of rewriting. For me, the method is not what's most important, but rather that the author chose to go back to an earlier work and use it to deliver a message, describe a situation, or present a portrait of a character. Why use the works of the colonizer to do these things? Why not reject outright the culture of colonialism in favor of an entirely original work that can serve as a purely native representation of life after colonialism? Of course, words such as "culture," "original," "pure," and "native," have meanings that should not and would not be taken for granted by

---

1 A short list of such "pairs" provides an idea of the variety of these texts and authors: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and *Surfacing* (1972) by Margaret Atwood and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1976) by Patrick White; Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Foe* (1986) and *Dusklands* (1982) by J. M. Coetzee; *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brönte and *Winward Heights* (19??) by Maryse Condé; *Jane Eyre* (1837) by Charlotte Brönte and *Guerrillas* (19??) by V.S.Naipaul.

any author or scholar, post-colonial or otherwise, writing today. Perhaps it is the difficulties inherent in terms like these that make such rewriting so attractive for post-colonial authors. To grapple directly with the "master narratives" of English literature, to reverse, to problematize, to improve--these are the possibilities afforded the author who chooses this method of writing and rewriting history.[2] While it can be argued that all post-colonial, or indeed, all post-modern writing makes these rhetorical moves as well, rewriting allows the author simultaneously to resist and accept the influence of the colonizer on both culture and writing--an advantage not seen with other types of post-colonial writing. In addition, such rewriting opens the earlier texts up to alternate readings. As Gayatri Spivak argues, "It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part in the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored." (1). Spivak goes on to argue that the fact that the imperialist role of literature has been ignored in the reading of nineteenth-century literature for so long is a testament to the continued success of the imperialist project.[3] Spivak then goes on to show how

[2] I use the term "master narrative" here to mean any influential or widely read work of English literature. I believe it is the field of English literature itself, as opposed to the theme or author of any individual work, that makes all such canonical texts into "master narratives."

Wide Sargasso Sea, Jean Rhys's 1967 reinscription of Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre,* helps to make the character of Bertha serve as a critique of imperialism and slavery, not just in Rhys's novel but in Brönte's story as well.

As Judie Newman argues in her survey of postcolonial rewrites, authors who choose to write about and deal with national ideologies built from local tradition, customs, and histories can find their work socially isolated and lacking readers, especially if these authors choose to write in a language other than English. Similarly, authors who push themselves into unfamiliar forms in order to internationalize might generate works that feel psychologically forced and unnatural.[4] One way to address this dilemma is to face head on the influence of the Western canon on their writing and in their lives by *rewriting* it in order to clear imaginative space for themselves. Roland Barthes explains that such as act runs contrary to the way literary institutions have traditionally decreed that texts must be approached. He says,

> Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader.

---

[3] Spivak's article was written in 1985, before the publication of Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), one of the first of many works since that time that have explored in great depth the presence of imperialism in nineteenth-century English literature.

[4] Newman calls these approaches "essentialist" and "epochalist" respectively.

> This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness—he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*. (4)

When writers reject this "referendum" and strive to "gain access to the magic of the signifier," they also participate in what Rachel Blau DuPlessis calls the "decolonization of the narrative" (112). DuPlessis, discussing revisionary tactics by twentieth-century women writers, says that classic literature has "induced a mixture of defensive paralysis and assertive transformation characteristic of [the] female position in culture, the defensive situation on the margins of speech and culture and the assertive repossession of a voice when oppositional narratives are invented" (107).[5] What women writers do, then, when they invent revisionary stories is attempt to forge an "anticolonial mythopoesis, an attack on cultural hegemony as it is."

The importance of the project of creating revisions critical of existing cultural agreements can be summed up in this statement by Adrienne Rich:

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[5] In this chapter, DuPlessis focuses on women revising myths, not classic literature. She says that, for female authors, facing the classics might be a bit less intense, because they "bear only the authority of school, not God" (107). But she argues, as Gilbert and Gubar also have intended, that taking an oppositional stance to the canon is nevertheless an anxious, difficult position (107).

> Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. . . We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. (35)

Implicit in Rich's argument here is the idea that rewriting tradition is enough to break its hold. This may be true in some sense, but the project inevitably carries with it a good deal of irony as well, as revisions perpetuate the canonicity of the works they revise well into the future. Moreover, it is important to remember that traditions are not all equivalent to one another; revising patriarchy, for example, may resemble the revision of colonialist discourse in some respects, but it will also differ from it in many ways. Also, as DuPlessis points out, creating a new, critical mythopoesis to supplant the old one excludes and assimilates as well, except that it is now the formerly muted group that is being affirmed and the formerly dominant group that is being muted (107). Of course, the *goal* for some revisionist writers may be just that, to mute the dominant group. But a vision (or re-vision) of such a world ignores the facts of the past and of the present and ultimately fails to make as strong a statement for the victimized group.

Understandably, then, post-colonial authors rewriting texts, in this space-clearing gesture of revision, do not attempt to sweep away the influence of the colonizer's culture either in their writing or in their lives. In fact, such tasks take on the difficult project of working *through* colonialism, acknowledging the transformation of the particular society shaped by, among other things, colonial education, the marginalization of native culture, the subjugation of native people , and the immigration of many natives to the metropolitan center of the empire.

In the case of Africa, for example, Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that the examination of this transformation, rather than the future that might lie beyond it, is so pervasive a task that it calls the "post" in the term "post-colonial" into question. He says,

> All aspects of contemporary African cultural life...have been influenced, often powerfully, by the transition of African societies *through* colonialism, but they are not all in the relevant sense *post*colonial. For the *post* in postcolonial, like the *post* in postmodern, is [a] space clearing gesture . . .and many areas of contemporary African cultural life are not in this way concerned with transcending, with going beyond, coloniality (149).

Appiah does not mean for this claim to imply that works that are not concerned with such transcendence are in some way less involved in creating a

contemporary identity for post-colonial societies than those that do. For Appiah, "there is no fully autochthonous pure-African culture awaiting salvage by our artists" (160). But he does claim that these works cannot be understood in terms of the space-clearing gesture of *postmodernism,* because "there is no antecedent practice whose claim to exclusivity of vision is rejected through these artworks" (149). This claim, I believe, presents a problem because it creates a method of declaring some works as having moved beyond coloniality and some as remaining trapped there.

This is similar to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's argument against the instruction of English in African universities and for the return to the use of native languages in creative works by African authors. For Ngugi, decolonization of the mind must occur before a subject is truly liberated. This decolonization, he believes, is possible only when accompanied by a complete rejection of the tools of the colonizer--including language and text. He says, "[B]y our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not on the cultural level continuing that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit?" (26). But can Ngugi's decolonization or Appiah's transcendence only be achieved through the rejection of the "the master's tools"?

Appropriation of those tools can clear a space for the postcolonial writer—a space that Homi Bhabha would call the "third space." Bhabha argues that we should be critical of the "positive aesthetic and political values

we ascribe to the unity or totality of cultures, especially those that have long and tyrannical histories of domination and misrecognition" (35). We should be critical, Bhabha says, because "cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other. . . The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space." For Bhabha, then, all meaning must move through this third space. In no situation can art be situated simply as "Self" or "Other," or in this case, "colonial" or "postcolonial."

My argument here is not that we cannot apply the labels "colonial" and "postcolonial" to works of art, but that the way that they are sometimes applied is too limiting to be useful to discussions of the postcolonial. No element of culture in a post-colonial society can transcend completely the experience of colonialism in the way writers and theorists like Ngugi insist upon. If "transcend" must mean to disregard the influence of the colonial culture, then how can any work of art successfully achieve this state? As Ngugi points out, the very act of writing in English acknowledges the influence of the colonizer and its language (3). However, even when a writer chooses to write his or her native language, as Ngugi has, this decision is made in an effort to oppose that influence—so the influence is still there. Because it is impossible to remove the *experience* of colonialism, it is also impossible to create art in postcolonial societies that does not bear the mark of this experience.

Writers who highlight this mark of experience by rewriting the colonizer's work can be seen to transcend colonialism as well, if we take that word to mean going beyond the limits of colonial subjectivity. To "transcend" the experience of colonialism is not to remove all traces of it, but rather to forge a subjectivity that can simultaneously accept, reject and revise, to various degrees, the experience and all of its attendant consequences.

Rewriting, one version of what Stephen Slemon calls "counter-discourse," enables this seemingly contradictory response to colonialism. This term, "counter-discourse," comes from Richard Terdiman's 1985 examination of symbolic resistance to the dominant discourse of nineteenth-century France. Terdiman claims that authors such as Flaubert, Balzac, and Mallarmé engaged in a counter-discursive practice that was meant to establish a liberating alternative to the intolerant, smug, and increasingly dominant bourgeois discourse of their time. But in trying to subvert the middle-class world that was being constructed before their eyes, they found themselves repeatedly drawn into a paradox. Terdiman argues that "the discourses of a society are structured in a shifting, multiform network of linked assertions and subversions, of normalized and heterodox speech. The linkage is essential and its character is complex" (16). Thus counter-discourses are always interlocked with the domination they contest. Rewrites of canonical texts, postcolonial or otherwise, refer to the perpetuation of the hegemony of English literature even

as they aim to challenge many of the notions contained within those texts. The relationship of the newer text to the older one is therefore simultaneously adversarial and intimate, but never simply imitative.

Derek Walcott offers his own controversial theory on post-colonial, or New World, appropriations. He says that to fight tradition openly is to perpetuate it and that all people in the New World have a "horror of the past," be they torturer or victim (370). Walcott understands that there can be no return to a pristine pre-colonial state and thus no writing that represents the "true" nature of the native before colonialism intervened in the national culture. Even for white post-colonial writers from the settler colonies, whose relationship to colonialism is fraught with difficult definitions and implications of culpability, there is an urgent need to address the influence colonialism has had on the national culture left behind by the Commonwealth. They need to find "a usable here, now, us, tongue" and "to define images of identity, of community, of history, of place" (Lawson 168). All writers must confront the hegemony of the Western canon in their writing, whether consciously or not, but for writers writing outside that tradition, or trying to escape it, this confrontation puts more at stake. For these writers, looking in from the margins of the canon, grappling with those works by revising them permits a literary acceptance of the importance of English literature, whether that acknowledgment comes in the form of an homage to the narrative, the

characters, or the plot, or simply from a testament to the timelessness of the work. Alongside this affirmation, however, postcolonial rewrites also write beyond or against the original work, breaking the patterns of representation perpetuated by the hegemony of English literature. Those patterns might have to do with representations of race, nation, religion, or tradition, to name just a few. Lastly, postcolonial rewrites force a new look at the old text, opening it up for alternate readings and in the process questioning further the method and history by which the text and its idea were received in the first place.

Wole Soyinka's 1979 play *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* provides an example of how a postcolonial rewriting of a canonical text, John Gay's 1720 play *The Beggar's Opera*, performs these tasks.[6] Soyinka's version also incorporates elements from Bertholt Brecht's 1928 version of Gay's play, *The Threepenny Opera*. By using Gay's text as his model, Soyinka acknowledges the daring of the first text, the first major English play to represent politics as a secularized sphere of action, "devoid equally of the charisma of kingship and the sanctity of religion" (Dharwadker 9).

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[6] Yemi Ogunbiyi notes that "Òpèrá Wónyòsi," when freely translated into English from Yoruba, means "the dupe who buys the 'Wonyosi' cloth. The title of the play is almost always written without the accents, however. Ogunbiyi says in a footnote to his review of the play that Soyinka was "particular in his choice of the accented version for the play's title, partly because of the play on the word 'Opera' and the appropriate relevance of the accented version to the entire meaning of the play" (3).

Gay's "politicians" here are criminals whose underworld reproduces the hierarchical structure of political England but who rely, as did the actual politicians of the day, on a highly organized legal and social system in order to cheat the very society they represent. The main characters include Peachum, simultaneously a thief-taker and leader of a large crime ring, his wife, a madam, and their daughter, Polly.[7] Polly falls in love with and marries MacHeath, the glamorous and ruthless highwayman. Other minor characters include several highwaymen and prostitutes, all of whom are presented as parodies of the aristocratic ideal, honorable and gentle, yet selling themselves daily. Gay's other characters, the Peachum family and the corrupt jailer Lockit and his wife, parody the bourgeois ideal, rising to power in this era of emergent capitalism. They are truly despicable, preying on each other merely because they can, despite long-standing ties of friendship and mutual support. Lockit says,

> Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one. Every one of us preys upon his neighbor, and yet we herd together. Peachum is my companion, my friend. According to the custom of the world, indeed,

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[7] A thief-taker was the eighteenth-century version of a bounty hunter, capturing criminals, turning them in to the authorities, and collecting the rewards. The character of Peachum is based on Jonathan Wild, a famous London thief-taker of the early eighteenth century who was ultimately revealed to have been the organizer of the largest crime network in London (Denning 43).

he may quote thousands of precedents for cheating me. And shall I not make use of the privilege of friendship to make him a return? (2638)

Gay clearly views the corruption of early eighteenth-century London as having resulted from the decay of aristocratic codes. As bourgeois society became more organized and interdependent, the possibilities for exploitation of the people, by the people, increased. The result, in Gay's view, is a corrupt oligarchy where crimes are celebrated if they are profitable and successfully accomplished.

The society Gay writes of is inherently duplicitous; people love the exploits of a murderous highwayman like MacHeath but gather in the thousands to watch him executed. Peachum tells his wife, "Murder is as fashionable a crime as a man can be guilty of. How many fine gentlemen have we in Newgate every year, purely upon that article? If they have the wherewithal to persuade the jury to bring it in manslaughter, what are they the worse for it?" (2610). One of the chief ironies here is that Peachum is a representative of the state--he turns in his own men to the authorities. He also "finds," for substantial rewards, the stolen property his own gang has taken. In working both sides, however, he holds himself to strict rules of profitability and organization, choosing which of his men shall die next according to what kind of message their execution would send to the people, how many would turn out to see it, and how profitable a thief the man has been. Crook-fingered

Jack, for instance, he will keep, because of his "one, two, three, four, five gold watches, and seven silver ones. . . Sixteen-snuff boxes, five of them true gold. Six dozen of handkerchiefs, four silver-hilted swords . . . and a piece of broad cloth." Of Jack, Peachum says, "Considering these are only the fruits of his leisure hours, I don't know a prettier fellow, for no man alive hath a more engaging presence on the road" (2609). Jack, of course, will live, as will Tom Tipple, who is "always too drunk to stand himself." Tipple's execution would not draw crowds, because he would require a cart to get him up to the gallows. Robin of Bagshot, also known as Bob Booty, becomes the chosen man because Peachum feels certain that one of Bob's "ladies" will soon inform on him out of spite, thus robbing Peachum of a forty-pound reward. As Clement Hawes notes, Peachum's organized, logical system of doling out life and death was widely understood by Gay's audience to have "scored direct hits on Prime Minister Robert Walpole and the chicanery of his bribery-based patronage machine" (145).[8]

This satire, directed at corruption in an emerging nation-state, is the connection that, for Soyinka, drives his version of Gay's tale. The analogue of criminals to politicians is certainly not unique to Gay's work, but the specific

[8] In fact, "Bob Booty" was a popular nickname for Walpole, implying that he was stealing from the public purse. In addition, "Bob" itself was slang for a shoplifter's assistant. Colin Nicholson points out that audiences of the time would have been entertained by these innuendoes. Nicholson also notes that the reference to Bob's ladies was pointed towards Walpole as well, as his extra-marital relationship with Maria Skerret was common knowledge (124).

criticism of a political system turned upside down, driven by bribery and full of politicians who pervert the conventions and rules they themselves set up to further the political and social goals of the state does provide a singular foundation for Soyinka's criticism of Nigeria. In *The Beggar's Opera*, the emerging nation is learning a new system, commercial capitalism. The 1720s in England, Michael Denning says, "had something of the sick quality of a 'banana republic'" (47). He calls this atmosphere a "recognized phase" of commercial capitalism where predators fight, from within the new system, for the spoils of power. Politicians, usually corrupt, gathered around them followings made loyal by kinship, special interest, or blackmail (47).

It is the inescapable corruption of Gay's society, both historical and literary, that Soyinka is drawn to in creating his depiction of Nigerian society in the 1970s. In the Foreword to the 1981 edition of the play, Soyinka says, "The Nigerian society which is portrayed, without one redeeming feature, is that oil-boom society of the seventies which every child knows only too well" (I). In his play, Soyinka, satirizes real political figures, as did Gay in *The Beggar's Opera*. In Soyinka's case his targets are the African dictators of the seventies, specifically Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic, called Boky in the play.[9] But like Gay's, Soyinka's criticism extends beyond

[9] Soyinka notes in the Foreword that this character is meant to represent several of the "repellent and vicious dictators" ruling on the African continent when the play premiered. In addition to Bokassa, he includes Idi Amin of Uganda

the political figures themselves to the society that supports them. He asserts that art should "expose, reflect, indeed magnify the decadent, rotted underbelly of a society that has lost its direction, jettisoned all sense of values and is careering down a precipice as fast as the latest artificial boom can take it" (iii). He says that *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* is an "exposition of levels of power in practice," and his critique extends to every citizen of the society who practices the "daily acts of amnesia" that allow the corrupt power structures to stay in place (ii-iii).

Soyinka's goal in satirizing the oil-boom society in Nigeria is to resist this "amnesia" and to expose the perversity he sees before him. Banqui, his fictionalized colony of expatriate Nigerians, is certainly perverse. Here, Gay's Peachum becomes Chief Anikura, who runs the "Home from Home for the Homeless," a school for beggars. In his opening song he says,

> Pray do not change your Con technique
> For to many, life isn't a picnic
> And outside the church
> Or the mosque is a wretch
> Who depends on your mood philanthropic.
>
> But look out one day you will find
> That pus-covered mask hides a mind . . . (3)

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and Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea (I).

Anikura's organization is set up carefully, with the "beggars" adhering to rules regarding where they beg, what sad stories they tell, what style of rags they wear, and, of course, how much of their "earnings" they must give to Anikura. The irony in this scenario is that the men who beg for Anikura are truly destitute, their sad stories are real, and the ragged clothes they wear are their only possessions.

Like Anikura, the other characters in *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* also make their livings off the corruption that has developed as the gaps between rich and poor and between powerful and powerless have continued to widen. MacHeath, who marries Anikura's daughter Polly, is much like Gay's hero of the same name, dashing, flamboyant, and the leader of a gang of robbers. He is even more prolific and violent than his eighteenth-century counterpart, however, being wanted for the "murder of two shopkeepers and four tourists, 30 burglaries, 23 street robberies, arsons, attempted murders, forgeries, perjuries etc etc not to mention the seduction of two sisters under the age of consent" (42). Yet Mack stays above the law through his partnership with Tiger Brown, the Police Commissioner to whom he gives twenty-five percent of everything he makes. Additionally, just as in Gay's drama, MacHeath marries the innocent Polly, although Soyinka's Polly catches on quickly to the scam and eventually takes over the gang, whereas Gay's Polly remains innocent and trusting both of MacHeath and of her father.

Soyinka's portrayal of Polly is a good place to begin in examining exactly why he used the earlier play as the foundation for his critique of modern Nigeria. For in her twentieth-century interpretation, Polly exhibits the characteristics of a seasoned criminal, despite her parents' and her husband's beliefs that she is innocent of their world. She sings in "The Song of Lost Innocence,"

> If men are beasts, shan't we ensure they cannot eat us?
> One day it's love, the next they raise their fists to beat us
> They throw you over when beauty goes and strength is sapped
> And you stare at the shreds of eternal love you had mapped
> .....
> But to teach you what life is all about
> There's nothing like a new life hereabouts
> And your breadwinner on the fast way out
> Soon ends your period of self-doubts. (44)

This Polly, unlike her eighteenth-century counterpart, knows the score. She still loves Mack, but works to protect herself as well. Soyinka's hardened Polly recalls the transformation Gay's Polly would undergo in the lesser-known sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, *Polly* (1724). In this play, MacHeath has been transported as a slave to the West Indies and Polly has begun the quest to find and reclaim him as her husband. She is immediately sold as a

slave upon her arrival, escapes, disguises herself as a man, and eventually captures MacHeath, who has disguised himself in blackface as a pirate captain. MacHeath's final words, just before he is put to death, are "*Alexander* the great was more successful. That's all" (2.2.135). The pirates themselves say, "Our profession is great, brothers. What can be more heroic than to have declar'd war with the whole world" (2.2.25). *Polly* extends the accusation of *The Beggar's Opera*, that the emerging nation-state of Britain thrived on legalized crime, to the colonial context of the West Indies. As Diane Dugaw argues, "The European presence in the New World, Gay insists, is a chaotic state of war between divergent 'Alexanders': rapacious planters and squabbling buccaneers, all of whose conquests stem from racism, pillage, cowardice, and greed" (201). Indeed, Gay seems to be defining colonialism as nothing more than glorified piracy. He strengthens this argument by giving each of MacHeath's gang members a surname that connotes both the violence and the specific nationality of the three nations most prominent in Caribbean colonialism—the British Hacker, the Dutch Vanderbluff, and the French Laguerre. Gay exposes here the hypocrisy of celebrating pirates as "heroes" many years before Peter Hulme reminds us that Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and other Elizabethan buccaneers were vicious pirates and robbers (181-188).

By moving the criminals of London to the colonial context of the West Indies, Gay highlights the inseparability of nation and empire during the founding of the British nation. Soyinka's play is set during a time of nation-building in post-independence Nigeria as well and by rewriting a play that critiques nation-building he demonstrates the ambiguity of laying claim to the Enlightenment legacy of Europe. His character Boky, for example, sees himself as the "Black Napoleon." He says,

> And he was a revolutionary. You may not remember, but France is the cradle of revolution . . . And Napoleon it was who eventually placed our mother country on the map. We have to emulate him . . . You must know that our mother country, not content with being the cradle of revolution is also the cradle of culture. So understand this—in this empire . . . em, nation, culture is on our priority list. (24)

This "slip," between "empire" and "nation," points to the slippage between nation and empire that took place in France when the liberty of the French Revolution gave way to the autocracy of Napoleon's empire.[10] Napoleon, who liked to imagine himself as a second Alexander the Great, serves as the

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[10] Clement Hawes also points out that, given *Òpèrá Wónyòsi*'s African setting, we should not forget that in *Orientalism*, Edward Said places the inauguration of modern Orientalism in Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign of 1798-99. He says, "An unprecedented invasion of some two hundred experts and intellectuals—encyclopedic imperialists, in short—was surely more significant, in retrospect, than the rather brief military intrusion. The military campaign failed, but "Egyptology," as an imperial discipline, was launched upon the world" (148).

European symbol for the kind of glory-seeking Soyinka sees as inherent in modern nation-building. What occurs in *Òpèrá Wónyòsi,* then, is not so much a simple reenactment of an Enlightenment project as the underscoring of a parallel, and suggestive, conflation of nation and empire that has troubled nation-building from its founding moment.

In foregrounding this tendency toward conflation, Soyinka critiques modern Nigeria's national culture "project," but he also joins Gay in a critique of the similar project that surrounded the development of a national culture in eighteenth-century Britain. Reading Gay after Soyinka also injects an imperial context into the first play that is not as clear when it is read alone. First, reading Soyinka encourages us to analyze *The Beggar's Opera* together with its sequel, *Polly*, and thus makes the connection between nation-building and colonialism more explicit. Second, reading *The Beggar's Opera* after *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* reminds us of the significant black presence *within* the borders of Great Britain during the eighteenth century, something we do not actually see in the first play. African princes were being educated in British universities at this time, and the slave trade and Christian missionaries continued to increase the numbers of African people who became part of the transatlantic African diaspora (Gilroy 88). In fact, the 1789 London publication of Ibo author Olaudah Equiano's autobiography in English demonstrates that the histories of English and African literatures were increasingly imbedded even during the

eighteenth century. Soyinka's rewrite helps to remind the audience of that black presence as we consider the legacy of the nation-building in England that Gay critiques.

As this analysis of *Òpèrá Wónyòsi* demonstrates, the act of rewriting canonical English texts from a postcolonial perspective is more than just an oppositional stance against metropolitan tradition. While this strategy of writing can be classified as "counter-discourse," we should remember that counter-discourse is inextricably intertwined with the discourse it attempts to counter. The authors of the 1989 text, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, identify postcolonial writing as a "counter-discourse" because it "obtains its meaning in conflict and contradiction" (169). But if postcolonial writing must be seen always, and only, as a subversion of Western tradition, the positive aspects of hybridity found within the postcolonial culture are ignored. Writers such as Soyinka, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Derek Walcott, Jean Rhys and the other authors discussed in the following chapters acknowledge and celebrate Western stories and storytelling. At the same time, they assert their mastery of the tools of such storytelling by moving the text beyond its former boundaries. They include themselves where they were formerly excluded and, in doing so, force alternative readings of old texts. This subtle method of subversion, neither fawning imitation nor bitter opposition, often works to counter

misrepresentations and to uncover unheard voices. However, because these rewrites subvert by rewriting classic Western stories, rather than by attempting to portray a pristine pre-colonial culture, the impact is more lasting and ultimately more successful.

Chapter II: Three Versions of *The Tempest*

As I noted in Chapter I, the phenomenon of rewriting canonical English texts from a postcolonial perspective is one to which authors from all over the postcolonial world have contributed. Individual rewrites of specific canonical texts have been discussed by post-colonial critics, but the act of rewriting itself remains largely untheorized.[11] The theory of rewriting in this chapter is based largely on a division of the former British colonies into three sub-groups: the imperial colonies, the settler colonies, and the Caribbean colonies. These sub-groups are important in discussing why, despite the vastly different experiences of colonized people in, for instance, New Zealand and Nigeria, or Canada and Trinidad, the tendency to rewrite traditional British works remains strong in each variety of colonialism. In this chapter, I will examine three different rewritings of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: one from India, one from Canada, and one from Barbados. In doing so, I will demonstrate the different strategies of rewriting used by each author and the reasons behind their strategies. My contention is that in all three of these texts, the colonial

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[11] A few examples of scholarship that examines specific British texts and their rewrites include Diana Brydon's "Rewriting *The Tempest*" and "'The Thematic Ancestor': Joseph Conrad, Patrick White and Margaret Atwood," Chantal Zabus's "A Calibanic Tempest in Anglophone and Francophone New World Writing," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," and Judie Newman's *The Ballistic Bard*, which does include an introduction devoted to such post-colonial rewriting—but then goes on to discuss specific works in each chapter without explicitly returning to the theories discussed in the introduction.

history and experiences of the author's country direct the ways in which the original text is rewritten. Each author's colonial and post-colonial experiences inform what I think of as the "level" of rewriting—that is, how far the authors proceed in reworking and using the text to reflect their own societies and the impact of British culture on those societies. The order in which they appear here is significant, as the discussion moves from the most subtle level of rewriting to the most overt. Thus, in the Indian appropriation of *The Tempest*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975) by Anita Desai, the author strongly alludes to the plot and characters of Shakespeare's drama but does not actually recreate the action of the play. I describe this version of rewriting as "writing through" the European text. By means of these allusions to Shakespeare, Desai ultimately undermines the patriarchal structure of the original text simply by not repeating it. In the Canadian version, *Tempest-Tost* (1952) by Robertson Davies, the new text venerates the original text and its authority while nevertheless accommodating it to the unique Canadian experience. I call this "writing back" to the cosmopolitan center, an almost epistolary act. Finally, in the Barbados version, George Lamming's *Water with Berries* (1972), the author appropriates the text, rips it apart and reassembles it, creating a completely new story and conclusion while using the same characters, themes, and plot points. This is "rewriting" as such. All three of these rewrites work toward the same goals explained in Chapter I. They all acknowledge, on

different levels and in different ways, the influence of Western literature through each text's engagement with *The Tempest.* The importance of Shakespeare's play in the history of literary representations of imperialism is solidified by the fact that all three of these authors return either to its characters or to its plot to represent the postcolonial situations of their own countries many years later. However, all of these authors use these rewrites to challenge the legacy left by Shakespeare and *The Tempest.* Desai uses her allusions to the play to challenge the patriarchal structures both of colonialism and of the traditional Indian home. Davies's allegorical rewriting questions the appropriateness of putting Canadian art into an English mold. Lamming's radical extension of the characters of *The Tempest* into post-war London examines the effect on all those characters of the stereotypes under which they labor and ultimately liberates them from this bondage. All three of these versions of the play ask the reader to reexamine the original text, opening it up to new questions regarding colonialism, art, and race.

The Tempest has been returned to many times by writers in the post-colonial world.[12] The useful metaphor of the Caliban/Prospero relationship

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[12] The Caribbean versions of *The Tempest* include *Water with Berries* and a critical reading, *The Pleasures of Exile,* by George Lamming, "Limbo," a poem by Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*, and C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins.* Canadian versions include: *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, by Charles G.D. Roberts, *Tempest-Tost* by Robertson Davies, *The Diviners*, by Margaret Laurence, *Prospero on the Island*, by Audrey

was first extended by French psychologist Octave Mannoni in *Caliban and Prospero* (1950). Mannoni explains the psychology of the colonized Malagasy through what he called a dependency complex. While it is perhaps understandable how an outsider such as Mannoni could have seen political and psychological subjugation as happy dependency and inferiority, Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire immediately attacked Mannoni's hypothesis, with Fanon asserting that Mannoni "leaves the Malagasy no choice safe between inferiority and dependency" (93). Yet Mannoni's use of the Prospero/Caliban metaphor proved to be very useful. While the relationship between Prospero and Caliban seems most easily applied to the Caribbean, because of the island setting and the theme of slavery and domination, authors from every corner of the post-colonial world have been drawn to the play. Prospero's control of all the island's inhabitants--Caliban, Ariel, and Miranda--is a rich metaphor for the different varieties of control England exerted over its colonies. All three writers discussed here take up these themes in a different way, but the goal is the same: to assert and validate their experiences in a post-colonial world and their own subjectivities as post-colonial writers.

Thomas, and *O Master Caliban!* by Phyllis Gotlieb. In addition, Australian Randolph Stow's *Visitants* is a rewrite of the play.

Undermining Tradition in the Imperial Colonies

In many discussions of European imperialism, the colonies are divided into two broad categories, imperial colonies and settler colonies.[13] In the first category, the imperial, which includes the Indian sub-continent and the many former European colonies of Africa, there existed a rich culture long before colonization. The attempt to abrogate these native cultures and languages and substitute European ones often fostered a violent and highly oppositional relationship with the colonizer. Given the nature of this relationship, Anita Desai's technique of drawing on *The Tempest* but not actually rewriting it is understandable. In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* this strategy allows her to undermine the European tradition while at the same time emphasizing that tradition's importance in Indian life. Using, and using well, the same forms, symbols, or imagery from such a colonial text but at the same time "telling her own story" allows Desai to, in effect, debunk the myth of European canonical superiority.

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[13] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin cite D. E. S. Maxwell's theory of post-colonial literature as an early example of the division of colonies into settler and imperial. Maxwell's focus on the disjunction between place and language led him to compare these societies and their use of a non-indigenous language. He then separated the imperial societies, where the imported language was alien to the colonized people, from the settler colonies, where the land was alien to the settler. Ultimately, Maxwell's division is unsatisfactory because it excludes the Caribbean and because it ignores the indigenous people of the settler colonies (*Empire* 24-25).

Such appropriation can also provide authors with the opportunity to examine the structures established after the colonial power has been driven out--the post-independence or neocolonial society. Aparna Dharwadker has pointed out that the canonical texts being appropriated may themselves be "deeply subversive," allowing the post-colonial writer to draw on the radical elements of the old text in developing the new text and writing *through* the received text, rather than *against* it. For instance, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* borrows much of its narrative style, several plot elements and characters, and its vision of time from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, but in no way does Rushdie place himself or his novel in opposition to Sterne. Dharwadker concludes that this tendency to choose radical texts to rewrite demonstrates an "anti-nationalist" rather than an "anti-colonialist" discourse (6). Indeed, a brief survey of such texts demonstrates that even when the texts they choose to rewrite are canonical, as is *The Tempest*, imperial writers do not always direct their subversion towards the former colonial power.[14] It is often internalized, becoming a critique of the post-independence society in their own countries, rather than just a response to domination.

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[14] For example, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* delivers a complex, controversial version of modern Indian history that saves its harshest criticism for the Indian and Pakistani governments, and Wole Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi* is highly critical of the post-independence Nigerian government.

In *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*, Desai follows this pattern in pointing criticism toward post-independence India, portraying Bombay as a soulless, violent city, where conflict is unavoidable and the weak are doomed to suffer.[15] This portrayal comes through most clearly in an incident in which Sita, the novel's heroine, attempts to save a wounded eagle from a flock of menacing crows. Though she shoots at them with a toy pop-gun, the attacking birds remain undeterred:

> With glee the crows whistled—*whee*; in ecstasy they waved their wings; *craa-craa*, they laughed and rasped as they whipped [the eagle] with their blue-bottle wings and tore into it with their scimitar beaks. It rose weakly, tried to crawl into the shelter of the wall's shadow and its wings, leaf-red, scraped the concrete, then its head, gold-beaked, fell to one side. (38-39)

This incident is immediately followed by another, more serious fight, this time a brawl involving all the neighborhood *ayahs*, including Rosie, her children's *ayah*. Sita hears the commotion and runs into the street, to be confronted by

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[15] Bombay, renamed Mumbai in the 1990s, suffers from extreme problems caused by an extraordinarily dense population. In 1971, the population of Bombay was 5,970,575 with 791 persons per acre. The absence of opportunities in the rural parts of India, especially after independence, drove many people to this industrial port city, leading to an unusually multicultural mix of residents. The city remains more ethnically mixed than any city in India. Poor urban planning, by the British government and later by the post-independence government, has created several city areas where ethnically charged conflict is unavoidable given the tightly packed population and abhorrent living conditions of the poor (*History of Mumbai*)

"Goanese women, Mangaloreans, fisher folk turned city domestics, Bombay women, huge-hipped, deep-thighed, pink-gummed and habitually raucous, they were pushing each other, then pulling, tearing each other's flowered frocks and pink and green saris, then dragging the rips together. All were bawling" (42). These incidents, along with several minor ones, convince Sita that her life in the city is surrounded by violence. These two incidents in particular call to mind specifically the religious and tribal fighting of post-independence India. The "scimitar" beaks of the crows bring to mind the curved swords associated with Muslims and Sikhs, which in turn signify the religious turmoil that had plagued India, particularly since independence in 1947. Sita, devoted to non-violence, is drawn into the battle, moves beyond merely defending the eagle, and becomes aggressive and offensive in her attempts to wound the crows. She fears that her children, living in the congested, divided city, will be drawn into such battles as well, but with human beings instead of crows. The fight among the ayahs, with the different women described according to their tribal affiliation and Rosie "screaming abuses in three languages," recalls the Bombay language riots of 1960.[16] Again, Sita fears that her family will be drawn into the clashes that seem inevitable in the city. Shortly after these

[16] In 1960, Marathi and Guajarati demonstrators sought the redrawing of state boundaries along language lines, with each group hoping to establish a government for the state that would be more attuned to their needs.

incidents she leaves Bombay in search of the India of her childhood—the pre-independence India to which she ascribes a sense of order and peace.

In order to examine further how this novel grapples with the change from colonial India to post-independence India, it is helpful to look at the implications of rewriting for Indian writers such as Desai. Rewriting canonical texts allows them to do more than offer a simple response to the objectification of the native that has been created in many of the traditional texts of European literature. However, a brief look at this objectification will help to demonstrate the difference between the typical colonial writer's portrait of the relationship between the native and the colonial and a post-colonial writer's depiction of this same relationship.

In the traditional texts of English literature, especially the three most commonly rewritten in a post-colonial context, *The Tempest*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Robinson Crusoe*, colonized people saw themselves always positioned as the Other, the object of colonial aggression. The point of view is always that of the European, who adheres to traditional European value systems--white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, and Christian. As Abdul R. Janmohamed has argued, for the colonialist, the method of writing is ahistorical and non-teleological. He says,

> since the colonialist wants to maintain his privileges by preserving the status quo, his representation of the world contains

> neither a sense of historical becoming, nor a concrete vision of a future different from the present, nor a teleology other than the infinitely postponed process of "civilising." In short, it does not contain any syncretic cultural possibility, which alone would open up the historic once more. (64)

Janmohamed characterizes the colonialists' representation of the world as evoking "the economy of Manichean allegory" (64), virtually the same characterization Frantz Fanon ascribed to the colonial's world view many years earlier in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). Put simply, in Fanon's view, the colonialist writer sees the world of the native as the negation of the world of the colonizer–everything the colonizer is, the native is not, and vice versa. The Other in colonial works, such as *The Tempest* and *Robinson Crusoe*, then becomes fetishized and represents the opposite of the subject, the colonizer.

If post-colonial writers choose to contend with this fetishized Other, dismantling and rebuilding the texts that have created it is a particularly powerful strategy. If the Other assumes the subject position, a different identity can emerge. This is not, however, a mere reversal of roles. Post-colonial writers dealing with this subject reversal do not tend to fetishize the colonizer, as this would reinforce the previous schema, but rather define and illuminate the meeting grounds where the identity of the colonizer and colonized converge. These meeting grounds are often blurry and using a text

that is familiar, even though it is of Western origin, can help to delineate these questions of identity. Thus, in Desai's retelling of *The Tempest*, Caliban and Miranda do not turn into powerful, controlling forces while Prospero is demonized and made dependent—but rather the versions of all three characters act as both subject and object, acting and being acted upon, but ultimately held responsible by the narrative for their own actions.

In the incorporation of many elements of *The Tempest* in its plot and character development, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* offers a powerful example of *writing through*. Unlike many post-colonial rewritings, Desai's story does not present a new version of the play but rather alludes to it. More than just a nod to the original work, however, these allusions provide a commentary on post-colonial and neo-colonial society in India and on the conditions and customs left in place after colonial rule was over. The novel begins in Bombay in 1967 with Sita, a pregnant mother of four, taking her two youngest children to the island of Manori, where she and her siblings were raised by their father. The middle section of the novel is set in 1947, immediately after independence, and tells the story of this childhood. Sita's father, who is revered by the islanders as "the second Ghandi," deceived his followers by grinding up rubies and pearls and mixing this "magic dust" with harmless potions meant to cure their ills. Like Prospero's magic, which comes from Ariel, the powers of Sita's father are not what they seem to be. He even

has an Ariel figure, his oldest daughter Rekha, whose angelic voice helps him to control the villagers. His son, Jivan, serves as a Caliban figure, being the only inhabitant of the island to doubt his father's motives and sincerity. Jivan eventually leaves the island an outcast and spends the rest of his life as a sort of outlaw.

In this family constellation, Sita, the youngest daughter, represents Miranda: she begins as a faithful, devoted daughter, captivated by her father's magic and wisdom. Sita moves beyond the boundaries of Miranda's character when she finds out the truth about her father and rejects him. Twenty years later, Sita has become stifled with the boredom and hypocrisy of her middle-class life in Bombay. Eight months pregnant with her fourth child, she has come to the irrational conclusion that she can save this child from the violence surrounding them by returning to the "magic" island of her youth. She believes that on the island she will be able to *not* give birth, but to carry the child indefinitely. Upon arriving in Manori, she immediately begins a series of discoveries that remind her why she rejected her father and his island in the first place. For example, her first look at the village on the island is not what she remembered. She thinks, "It was not picturesque--that seemed to startle her; perhaps she had forgotten that. The fields were only pits of mud and slush. . . . The Manori village was an evil mass of overflowing drains, gaping thatched roofs and mud huts all battered and awry" (22). Also, the well her

father dug, that the villagers claim has "sweet water," is actually sour and undrinkable--a fact she knew as a child, but had to discover again upon her return.

When Sita realizes that she has idealized the past and attempted only to hide from the present, her discovery parallels similar revelations about India and its post-independence life. Even though she discovered in her youth that her father's magic was false, her years away from the island in Bombay, where she felt trapped by violence and hypocrisy, have left her believing once again. The narrator says, "The island had been buried beneath her consciousness deliberately, for years. Its black magic, its subtle glamour had grown too huge, had engulfed her at a time when she was still very young and quite alone. . . . [Now] she refused to walk another step. She would turn, go back, and find the island once more" (57-58).

In this passage, Desai is "writing through" the colonizer's text. As Andrew Hadfield has noted, many scholars have examined Prospero's exploitation of Caliban and the similarity of their relationship to that between English colonizers and New World natives. But, Hadfield argues, the same relationship also provides an analogy for the social inequalities of Elizabethan England. Hadfield describes the first scene in the play, the shipwreck, and notes how it pits the aristocratic passengers against the working sailors. This scene, Hadfield says, "remind[s] the audience that treatment of various

underclasses within England was not necessarily better than the treatment of colonial subjects by their masters" (246). Hadfield then notes the contradiction between Gonzalo's call for the removel of all trappings of European civilization, including rank and hierarchy, and his constant reinforcement of class differences (247).

If we foreground the class issues brought out be this alternate reading of *The Tempest*, we can see more clearly how Desai writes through the play's plot. For instance, Sita is troubled by the class relations she sees in the city and she convinces herself that she can recover her native land of India as it was under the spell of the "black magic" of colonialism, where such problems, for her, did not exist. She attempts the "black magic" of withholding birth in a gesture parallel to her wish that she could go back to her childhood, before the "birth" of modern India.

In addition, if we return to the second part of Hadfield's reading, Desai's desire to point to the hypocrisy of blaming modern India's problems on the British emerges more clearly. Like Gonzalo, who longs for a world where all are free to govern themselves, Sita once believed that if she and her siblings were to escape the power of their father, all would be well. As an adult, she see, partly through the incident with the crows, that the powerful still prey on the weak. So she returns to the island, deluding herself into believing she can recapture that "magic." Here, however, she finds the sour well, reminding her

that while the appearance of order may have exsisted, it was only a facade. Sita then returns to Bombay to give birth, participating in a kind of "rebirth" of the nation and the text in their re-possession by the postcolonial subject.

Venerating the Canon in the Settler Colonies

The white settler colonies, including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, because of their European ancestry, common language and ethnic background, and their alignment with European culture, have a more ambiguous relationship with Great Britain than either the Imperial colonies or the Caribbean. The settlers' complicitous role in colonization identifies them with the colonizer. In addition, their persecution of the indigenous peoples of their own lands, the First Nations peoples of Canada, the Maoris in New Zealand, and the Aborigines in Australia, makes a makes a strictly oppositional relationship with the Mother Country seem hypocritical. Yet the colonies' positions as off-shoots of England, and thus societies with no "authentic" culture of their own, puts them at the margins of the English literary tradition, exactly where the literature of non-Western colonies has been residing. This dual position, as both colonizer and colonized, leads to a tendency, embodied in the text discussed here, to venerate the ideas of canonical texts while still demonstrating the danger of a strict application of the form to the settler situation.

Unlike the situation in the imperial colonies, in the settler colonies the "economy of Manichean allegory" is not so easily evoked. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin describe the settler dilemma as a lack of choice both in language and in value system: "having no ancestral contact with the land, they [the settlers] dealt with their sense of displacement by unquestioningly clinging to a belief in the adequacy of the imported language. Where mistranslation could not be overlooked it was the land or the season which was wrong" (25). But as the original British settlers in the settler colonies began to become accustomed to their home, these unquestioning beliefs came less easily. The tension between the traditional past and the historical present became, for many settler artists, a confusing dilemma.

In the white colonies, a clear delineation of self/other does not exist. As Stephen Slemon has pointed out, the settler colonies have never even had the "*illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division," and as a result, "sites of figural contestation between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, have been taken inward and internalized" (38). The roles of settlers in colonization, their ancestry and appearance, and their own positions of power in the colony all serve to destabilize further the concept of self already confused by colonialism. For writers in these countries it is not clear if they are the self or the other in the original text, so the rewriting of this text becomes especially important. On the one hand, they embody traditional

European value systems; attempting to resist these values would be to resist their own history and culture. On the other hand, while simply continuing to produce literature in the English tradition might initially seem logical, a problem surfaces when the forms and values of traditional English culture can no longer adequately describe their experiences.

The English education received in the settler colonies also contributed to the stifling confusion of their situation. The 1872 Foster Act brought compulsory education to all children in Great Britain and the empire. This education forged a unified state/empire that emphasized the colonial mission of English literature. In Canada, evidence of this ranges from topics assigned for composition—"The connection between literary excellence and natural greatness, as exhibited in English history"—to declarations that Shakespeare was "virtually a type of colonist . . . appreciated among the junior members of the family of nations—among the human downrootings from the great mothertree of England" (qtd. in Willinsky 7). John Willinsky argues that education in Canada continues to define the country's place as a "proper extension of English culture" (18). Willinsky goes on to quote Canada's most famous literary critic, Northrop Frye, on Canadian literature in 1963, "When Canada was still a country for pioneers, it was assumed that a new country, a new society, new things to look at and new experiences would produce a new literature" (qtd. in Willinsky 18). Willinsky reports that the educational

institutions in Canada, symbolized by Frye, believe that it has not. "All," he says sarcastically, "is imitation and invisibility, with the centre of meaning located in an anglo-American imaginative terrain" (18). The results, he says, are students who believe that art must spring only from the cultural foundations of the "mother country" or from the enormous presence of the United States.

In the settler colonies, then, the focus of rewriting tends to revolve around their art, culture, and politics and the settlers' inevitable feelings of inferiority regarding these issues. Such inferiority complexes are manifested differently here than in the imperial colonies or the Caribbean because, paradoxically, acknowledging one's inferiority to the motherland can be seen as an invigorating loyalty to the ancestral identity. The inferiority complex is not imposed, it is donned voluntarily, making it all the more difficult to overcome.

If settler literature will inevitably be viewed as peripheral to Great Britain, then by returning to the hallowed canon settler writers may gain some sense of foundation for their writing. Because the connection between *The Tempest* and the settler--specifically, in my example, the Canadian–experience is not as obvious as it is in either the Caribbean or India, the themes of the original work must be explored more deeply in order to explain why so many Canadian authors have been drawn to the play. The issues of slavery and colonization are, of course, paramount in the plot of *The Tempest*, but the issue

of art is present as well. Prospero physically controls Caliban and Miranda, but his hold on Ariel is more complicated. Ariel is a spirit, possessing the magical powers that Prospero uses for his own needs. What binds Ariel to Prospero is a fear of his retaliation and an indebtedness for having been rescued from Sycorax. Ariel wants to be free, but cannot shed these constraints. The confrontation between Prospero and his servant over Ariel's freedom illustrates how he is bound:

Pros. How now? Moody? What is't thou canst demand?

Ari. My liberty.

Pros. Before the time be out? No more!

Ari. I prithee,

Remember I have done thee worthy service,

Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakes, serv'd

Without grudge or grumblings. Thou did promise

To bate me a full year.

Pros. Dost thou forget

From what a torment I did free thee?

Ari. No. (1.2.243-52)

Prospero continually reminds Ariel what a debt is owed to him. Ariel is never free to use his magic for his own purposes, but must remain under the service of Prospero.

Arguably, the artistic situation in Canada is analogous to this relationship. While Canadians continue to create their own art, it is repeatedly held up, by themselves and by others, not only to the supposed superiority of British art but also to their inextricable bond to that metropolitan art. John Moss, in discussing the Canadian novel, sees a pattern of isolation caused by this comparison to British literature. This isolation, he says, can take the form of what he calls "colonial exile":

> The colonial effect is residual, like a racial memory. It does not derive from the original conditions of colonization. . . . But from the perpetuation by ensuing generations of their forebears' ancillary function as colonists. In fiction, the colonial effect is sustained by the author's response to being born in exile, which translates into the self-conscious tonality. (56)

Margaret Atwood agrees that Canadian fiction deals heavily with the issue of exile, but unlike Moss, she sees an optimistic side to the situation. Atwood claims that the central symbol for Canada is one of survival and that the literature stems from the Canadian writer's need to survive amidst the criticism that her work is "second-rate, provincial, and regional." The Canadian writer is tempted to "squeeze his work into shapes that are not his . . . and disguise himself as a fake Englishman or American" (182), and the impulse to do this must be "survived" (183). Insofar as *The Tempest* deals with the issues of

artistic control and power, its themes are especially suited to this Canadian situation, as Robertson Davies recognizes in *Tempest-Tost*, his allegorical farce of art and artists in Canada.

In this novel, the Salterton Little Theatre is mounting an amateur production of *The Tempest*. The inability of the actors to understand and perform the play is made worse by their blind insistence on remaining true to the original work. The performance of the play and the problems that surround it illuminate the "problem" of Canadian art or at least Davies's view of this problem. Aside from the play production, the other main storyline involves the hapless old bachelor Hector Mackilwraith and his attempts to win over the play's Ariel, the rich and vapid Griselda. In this second plot, Hector, who plays Gonzalo in the play, is a humorless, awkward, lonely schoolteacher with a complete lack of passion. He chooses to seek a role in the play in order to augment his social life and aspires to the part of Gonzalo for entirely artless reasons. Of the role he thinks,

> This person was described as 'an honest old counsellor', and he had no offensive lines to speak; he had fifty-two speeches, some of them quite long but none which would place an undue strain upon his memory; he was not required to do anything silly, and he would require a fairly impressive costume and almost certainly the desired false whiskers. (51)

Hector represents, for Davies, the standard Canadian view of art in the 1950s.

Generally, this view held that art should be somber and serious, or else it should be pleasantly entertaining, serving an almost utilitarian purpose. (Davies *Merry* 144-153). At the same time, classics, coming as they do from the English canon, are not to be changed and appropriated. For someone like Hector, then, the production should remain serious and dull, and the costumes, makeup, and sets should be elaborate enough to convince the audience that it is being "entertained."

While the rest of the characters in the novel disdain Hector, both because of his lack of acting skills and because of his staid lifestyle, they support his view of art. Professor Vambrace, for example, who is the play's Prospero, continually provides a stumbling block to the director's conception of the play, venerating Shakespeare, insisting that it be done in what he feels is the "classic" style. By "classic," Vambrace means the way they have classically done Shakespeare in Salterton, which has always been awful. The Salterton troup has tended to stick to their own interpretation of the plays, which generally has meant to perform what was on the written page and little else. Here, Shakespeare is *so* venerated that he is not even interpreted, a situation that usually results in a very bad play. Davies's implication here is that the literature must be adapted from an English situation into a Canadian one, and to ignore this is to create not art but a parody of art. In the early rehearsals a fight takes shape between Vambrace, leading the forces of

"Simplicity," and Solly, the assistant director, who prefers more elaborate props and costumes that might distract from the problems of the production and keep the interest of the audience. After a compromise is reached, one of the "artistic" cast members disparages the other side, saying, "They think Shakespeare can be run on his own steam. He can't. You've got to have as much lavishness in costume and setting as you can, or your play will be a flop. The day of Shakespeare in cheesecloth costumes and a few tatty drapes is done" (186).

In a similar vein, Solly notes that the Simplicity contingent has a decidedly Canadian view. They favor blandness and have unremarkable tastes. He, on the other hand, thinks differently: "All celebrations should be wonderful . . .And that is one of the big troubles with Canada; we have very little ceremonial sense. What have we to compare with the Mardi Gras, or the Battle of Flowers? Nothing. Not a bloody thing" (185). In both cases, characters who have devoted their lives to art present the need for props in the absence of felt cultural connections to these texts--in other words, in the absence of culture and art appropriate to the Canadian situation. This faction understands the need to move beyond English art, but can only move so far as to disguise those old forms; they do not create new ones. The combination of these two approaches, leaving the classics alone on the one hand and disguising them with props on the other, resides in Hector's character—who is

ultimately so stymied by the disparity between what he knows and what he sees that he cannot perform because he has attempted suicide.

Another disagreement occurs when Valentine, the play's American director, fails to chastise the company after their dress rehearsal. They expected to be told that they were "the worst actors in the world" and that she regretted "that she had ever consented to work with them" (242). She and Vambrace then get into an argument regarding the nature of professional actors versus amateur actors. Vambrace says, "[Amateurs] can accept criticism of a type which would be unacceptable to the more–how shall I put it–the more–well, the more elementary intelligences of professional players" (246-47). Val counters this by saying that the best of amateurs are but children in art and "one must teach children by kindness" (247). When Val questions this perverse need to be insulted, Solly explains, "They are sacrificing to our Canadian God. . . . We all believe that if we fret and abuse ourselves sufficiently, Providence will take pity and smile upon anything we attempt" (250). If the "Canadian God" is one of self-abuse and pity, Canadians will never by free to create their own art. They will always feel inferior to what came before and hope only that it will be judged adequate.

The culmination of the story line involving Hector/Gonzalo indicates the significance, for Davies, of the Canadian problem with art. Hector, who has fallen in love with Griselda/Ariel, attempts suicide because he believes she

has "compromised her virtue" with Roger/Ferdinand. Hector creates an image for himself of Griselda, who in her role as Ariel represents the spirit of art trying to shed the bonds Canada has imposed on her. Griselda feels she has talent as an actress, but her upbringing has encouraged her to focus instead on her beauty and wealth, attributes for which she does not have to work. Ultimately, Griselda is vain and indecisive, comfortable with what she has and unwilling to risk losing her name and reputation. Hector, without any evidence, convinces himself that Griselda is a perfect young woman who is being tainted by the men who try to win her love. In despair that her virtue has been somehow compromised, Hector tries to hang himself backstage during the opening night performance. For Davies, Hector's misguided view of Griselda, based on his old-fashioned and superficial notions of women, is analogous to Canada's view of art, which is often based on the supposed superiority of traditional British works.

Diana Brydon, in her article "Rewriting *The Tempest*," claims that English-Canadian authors identify with the character of Miranda, suggesting that Canada sees itself as the symbolic daughter to Britain's Prospero. Brydon further claims that of all the rewritings of the play she surveys, *Tempest-tost* is the only version in which the author links Canada to Miranda but links himself, as the narrative voice, to Prospero (77). She says that because most, if not all, of the roles in the play are miscast, Davies is then "wielding his magic in order

to manipulate and to judge the cast of his drama." In asserting this link, Brydon ignores the novel's more prominent figure of art in relation to the Canadian dilemma of achieving artistic validity within a post-colonial situation. Seeking a novelistic parallel for Prospero at all costs–even in something as airy as a "voice--" Brydon fails to investigate the fact that the novel actually presents no obvious "Prospero." If each of the characters in the novel is taken to represent the character from *The Tempest* he or she plays in Salterton's play (an assumption Brydon does not make), Professor Vambrace becomes the novel's Prospero. Highly ineffective as a leader of any sort, devoid of anything remotely "magical," Vambrace simply cannot play this role. Thus, in *Tempest-tost* the art of Ariel is left homeless and isolated, controlled by an absent power. When viewed in this context, the novel can be seen as Davies's attempt to pay homage to the absent power of England in the form of Shakespeare's play while at the same time attempting to create a foundation for a distinctly Canadian kind of art. At the time Davies was writing, this was a difficult task. Margaret Atwood claims that a typical artist living in Canada prior to the 1960s would find himself in a society where

> the people read, it's true, and looked at pictures, but most of the books they read were imported from England and the States. . . Usually he found that his own work would be dismissed by sophisticated Canadian critics as "second-rate," "provincial," or "regional," simply for having

been produced here. . . In some decades he might have been mindlessly praised for being "Canadian," in other decades just as mindlessly denounced for the same reason. (181-182)

Atwood notes that Canada had an unusually high percentage of one-book writers up until the 1970s because, she says, most Canadian writers of this period simply gave up. Davies began writing novels in the 1950s (*Tempest-tost* was his first) and was, just as was Atwood's typical artist, dismissed by the Canadian critics for being "unCanadian." However, when his fourth novel, *Fifth Business*, began to garner widespread acclaim, many Canadian critics began to praise him for, among other things, his creation of a metaphor for Canada. Davies believed that "many Canadians began to see in [that] tale some relevance to themselves and to their country. Began, indeed, to think that perhaps the Canadian is Fifth Business in the affairs of the world" (*Merry* 59).[17]

Determining just who the "Canadian" is has been an important mission both for Canadian fiction and Canadian literary criticism (Surette 17). Davies has long been included on the list of canonical Canadian authors, but critics did

[17] "Fifth Business" is an opera term applied to the character who has no opposite. For example, there is the soprano, the heroine, and her counter-part, her lover the tenor. Then there is her rival, the contra-alto, and the villain or rival to the tenor, a bass. Fifth Business is the baritone. He has no opposite female and doesn't sing the flashy parts, but the business of the plot cannot go on without him because he "knows the secret of the hero's birth, or comes to the assistance of the heroine when she thinks all is lost" (*Merry* 60).

not start making such lists in earnest until the 1980s (Knowles 91). Leon Surette argues that one of the common characteristics of Canadian novels considered canonical is that they take seriously the task of "forging an indigenous culture" (24). He then goes on to note that the conventions of realism do not adapt well to such an endeavor and that most canonized Canadian authors "permit fantasy, magic, mysticism, or the uncanny in their fiction" (24).[18] Perhaps this is because the task itself is impossible. One cannot forge an indigenous culture—by its very definition, such a culture already exists. However, one can portray the art of a people who have forged a new culture in a new land, both with acceptance of and in opposition to the roots of their ancestral land. It is for this reason that Davies, in his first novel, turns to Shakespeare to begin this task.

Rewriting Tradition in the Caribbean Colonies

The many islands of the Caribbean present yet a third variety of colonization. The indigenous people of the Caribbean, the Caribs and Arawaks, were completely exterminated by the British within a century of colonization

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[18] Surette names Sheila Watson, Davies, Robert Kroetsch, Leonard Cohen, and Margaret Atwood as some of the most well-known authors who use these techniques. Although *The Salterton Trilogy,* of which *Tempest-tost* is a part, does not step outside the bounds of realism, all of Davies's subsequent novels do.

(Ashcroft, *Empire* 26). Most of the people living in the modern Caribbean are the descendants of African slaves brought to the islands through the infamous Middle Passage. Another large portion of the population is the product of another form of slavery that followed, indentured servitude. These people are largely of Indian or Chinese descent. Virtually everyone living in the modern Caribbean is an exile, like those in the settler colonies, so they share a common theme of exile and displacement in their writing. But most Caribbeans are also non-white non-European descendants of those brought to the islands and ripped from their cultures by force or by economic exploitation, so they share with Africa and India the themes of violence and cultural dispossession. Because writers from the Caribbean have only a disrupted and wildly diverse cultural heritage upon which to draw, they tend, in rewriting texts, to appropriate European traditions and make them unique to the Caribbean situation.

More than most other post-colonial areas, the Caribbean's present-day culture and society have been heavily influenced by the English education its inhabitants received. The reasons for this influence are twofold. Since the people of the Caribbean had no collective pre-colonial history to unite them, they were more dependent on the European educations they were receiving. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin note that

> education, whether state or missionary, primary or secondary, was a massive cannon in the artillery of empire. . . . [and] literary education had a particular valency. The brutality of colonial personnel was, through the deployment of literary tests in education, both converted to and justified by the implicit and explicit "claims" to superiority of civilisation embodied/encoded through the "fetish" of the English Book. (*Post-Colonial* 425-26)

This literary education was so thorough that, as Edward Kamau Brathwaite relates, children in the Caribbean could adequately describe the falling of snow, which they had never seen, through the descriptions of it in English texts. They could not, however, describe a hurricane, an occurrence they had witnessed many times (8-9).[19] This incongruity between the lives they were actually leading and the literature they were studying is the second reason English education in the Caribbean has had such an influence. Its inhabitants lacked words to describe their own lives, so they used the words of the colonizer. This situation is represented in the canonical rewriting from the Caribbean as well. In the absence of an authoritative pre-colonial discourse,

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[19] Brathwaite writes "We are more conscious (in terms of sensibility) of the falling of snow, for instance—the models are all there for the falling of the snow—than of the force of the hurricanes which take place every year. In other words, we haven't got the syllables, the syllabic intelligence, to describe the hurricane, which is our own experience"(8). He then tells of children who, when asked to write essays on the Creole landscape, wrote "the snow was falling on the canefields" (9).

these texts take the canonical works, rip them apart, and put them back together in a way that articulates the Caribbean experience.

Caribbean versions of *The Tempest* understandably foreground the role of Caliban. George Lamming, in his collection of essays, *The Pleasures of Exile*, explains the identification with the slave. He says, "Caliban is never accorded the power to see. He is always the measure of the condition which his physical appearance has already defined. Caliban is the excluded, that which is eternally below possibility, and always beyond reach" (107). Caribbean writers, too, are always beyond the center, despite their English educations. Their works have been considered novelty, not strictly art. Lamming explains the British reception of the Caribbean novel by citing a 1950s review in the *Times Literary Supplement* which referred to the West Indian novel as "an experiment." The review, he says, maddens one because "this type of mind cannot register the West Indian writer as a subject for intelligent and thoughtful discussion" (29). This inability of the "mother country" to see the art of the West Indies as equal to any art, especially its own, has led Caribbeans to identify very closely with Caliban.[20]

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[20] The perception of West Indian art has changed as I write this, and is no longer forced into comparisons with English art forms. But for Lamming, and other Caribbean authors of his generation, this percieved inferiority had a great impact on both the way they wrote and the perceptions they had of themselves as artists (Lamming *Pleasures* 1-34).

For instance, in Lamming's 1973 novel *Water with Berries*, three young Caribbeans have immigrated to London. Teeton, the revolutionary artist and husband to Randa, one of the novel's Mirandas; Roger, the musician/arsonist; and Derek, the once successful but now has-been actor, represent a composite Caliban. All three men have learned the master's art and succeeded in performing it, only to turn back violently on that master. For instance, Derek, who once played Othello at Stratford-upon-Avon and now plays corpses at the Circle Theatre in London, begins to brood over this reduction in status while attending a party in London. At the party, given by British patrons of the arts and attended primarily by Caribbean artists, these "Calibans" are offered champagne with strawberries or "water with berries" (*The Tempest* i.ii.336). During the premier of his play that night, Derek is suddenly seized by a "cannibal rage" and rapes the lead actress (214). Also, Teeton murders the Old Dowager, who has supported his painting and murdered her brother-in-law in order to save Teeton. In his narrative, Lamming uses one of the most powerful weapons of the colonizer, language, to retaliate against their source. He draws on the following speech from *The Tempest* to illustrate the importance of language in the colonial endeavor and subsequent decolonization:

> Cal. You taught me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (1.2. 362-64)

Lamming says of this speech that Caliban is using the language Prospero has taught him, "but [Caliban] can never be regarded [by Prospero] as an heir of that Language, since his use of Language is no more than his way of serving Prospero; and Prospero's instruction in this Language is only his way of measuring the distance which separates him from Caliban" (*Pleasures* 110).

For Lamming, it is this distance which is crucial to Prospero's control of Caliban, because he fears the possibility of seeing himself in his slave. In Chantal Zabus's analysis of Lamming's characters, "thus equipped with this new-found lingo and an identity of his own, Caliban is now ready to confront his master" (41). For Caribbean writers, Caliban's use of the master's language against him is perhaps the most attractive feature of Shakespeare's play. Lamming says of Prospero's "gift" of language to Caliban:

> There is no escape from the prison of Prospero's gift. Only the application of the Word to the darkness of Caliban's world could harness the beast which resides within this cannibal. This is the first important achievement of the colonising process. This gift of language is the deepest and most delicate bond of involvement. It has a certain finality. Caliban will never be the same again. Nor, for that matter, will Prospero. (*Pleasures* 109)

This gift of language, for the artist Calibans in *Water With Berries*, is an ambigous one. Because all three are quite intelligent and expressive, it seems

they should be able to escape the bonds of inferiority they feel from having been born on the fictional island of San Christobal. Roger, the musician, thinks of the place, "San Chistobal had no antiquity. . . . It was always a kind of embarrassment . . . that the island could not say 'before the birth of Christ'" (70). However, instead of overcoming the perceived limits of their past, all three disintegrate into false stereotypes and violent self-destruction. In addition to showing ambivalence about the value of the "gifts" of colonialism for his Calibans, Lamming's many Prosperos fail to profit from this relationship. Prospero is present in this novel first as the Old Dowager, Teeton's champion whom he later murders. But he can also be seen in her husband, who assumes responsibility for the family estate on San Christobal and has an incestuous relationship with his daughter Myra, and in that man's brother, Ferdinand, the Old Dowager's lover and Myra's real father. These characters do not profit from colonialism either, with Ferdinand declaring to Teeton, ". . .[T]hat experiment in ruling over your kind. It was a curse. . . . The wealth it fetched was a curse. The power it brought was a curse. . . . And it will come back to plague my race until one of us dies" (229).

This ambivalence on the part of both the colonizer and the colonized is in keeping with Paul Brown's reading of *The Tempest* as "not simply a reflection of colonialist practices but an intervention in an ambivalent and even contradictory discourse" (48). Brown argues that the text exemplifies a

"moment of historical crisis" and shows the exploitation inherent in colonialism and not merely the spoils.

In addition to language, another significant issue in *Water With Berries* is rape, the focus of the following passage from the original work:

> Pros. Thou most lying slave,
> Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee
> (Filth as thou art) with human care, and log'd thee
> In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
> The honor of my child.
>
> Cal. O ho, O ho, would't had been done!
> Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
> This isle with Calibans. (1.2.343-51)

One of the actual rapes contained in Lamming's novel takes place before a stunned theater audience. Ironically, this rape makes real the white audience's secret terror of the black man's sexuality and supports their fear of an apocalyptic end to European rule. Whereas Caliban did not fulfill the violence of Prospero's accusation, Derek, a highly sensitive, artistic Caliban, does. The irony lies in the fact that Derek believes he has been falsely stereotyped by racist myths generated by the discourse of imperialism, one example of which is *The Tempest.*

Dealing with the issue of rape allows Lamming to recreate the violence and rape perpetrated by the colonizer on the slaves in the Caribbean islands. In other words, Lamming uses the same weapon the colonizer used, the rape of the island women, resulting in children of mixed race, against the dominant culture, raping their women under the "spell" of the mythical sexuality the colonizer has attributed to the black man. Thus, Lamming is appropriating Prospero's own weapons, language and rape, to challenge the hierarchy under which they were used. In addition, Lamming is also appropriating Shakespeare's plot and characters to challenge the hierarchy under which they were taught. Lamming avoids constructing a simple reversal of *The Tempest* in part by creating characters that highlight the ambivalence about colonialism present in the original text.

In a 1973 interview, Lamming mentioned that Teeton had to "test the fiction of England by its reality" and to discover the "disintegration of that idea, the irrelevance and the falsity of that idea beside the hitherto obscured reality" (qtd. in Joseph 68). Lamming reads *The Tempest* as though Prospero has created a world in which the only way for Caliban to escape is through violence. He says, "It seems to me that there is almost a therapeutic need for a certain kind of violence in the breaking. There cannot be a parting of the ways. There has to be a smashing" (68). Despite being called a "monster," Caliban is a human being. He has positive traits that Shakespeare plainly states, including

a love for music and beauty and a desire to protect and appreciate the island. He also realizes that it was his "naiveté in welcoming Prospero to his country that led to his dispossession" (Joseph 68). Margaret Joseph also claims that partly because he speaks in verse while the other "low" characters with which he is grouped, Stephano and Trinculo, speak in prose, we are more likely to sympathize with him.[21] We therefore understand his obsessive fear of Prospero's "books," which identify the locus of power on the island with Prospero. These related readings (Lamming's and Joseph's) imply that Shakespeare may have been showing some ambivalence about the ethics of colonialism. Stephen Greenblatt also encourages us to consider the possibility that because Prospero feels no remorse for the harshness of Caliban's punishments, Shakespeare wants us to blame him and sympathize with Caliban ("Invisible" 22).

As Joseph argues, "Prospero brings disorder into Caliban's paradise as surely as another invader did into the Garden of Eden" (69). Just as Prospero's gift of language teaches Caliban the art of speaking in beautiful verse it has also taught him to curse. Moreover, can the gift of Prospero's language ever be a proper substitute for the native's loss of power? These questions lead Brown to call *The Tempest* a site of "radical ambivalence" (68). *Water with*

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[21] Joseph also notes that we are more likely to sympathize with Caliban over Ariel, Prospero's other captive, due to his being a spirit and therefore removed from us (69).

Berries, as a reading that foregrounds that ambivalence, not only emphasizes the impact Shakespeare's play has had on both the victims and the perpetrators of colonialism, it also forces a reexamination of the first's text ideology on the subject.

Pidgined English, Hybrid Writings

All of these writers, from each of the three types of colonies, are trying to create a new vision of their countries that incorporates both the influence of the European literary tradition and the autonomy of their own cultures. The notion of hybridity, which resists the idea of a pure post-colonial or pre-colonial culture, is applicable here. Even in countries where a strong pre-colonial past may be referred to, the cross-fertilization between colonized culture and colonizer culture provides a productive position from which to discuss post-colonial writing and theory. In considering hybridity, Homi Bhabha distinguishes between cultural diversity and cultural difference. This distinction is important in post-colonial situations because the simpler concept, diversity, is often mistaken for the more complex difference--a mistake that can lead to the underestimation of post-colonial societies. The recognition of cultural diversity, Bhabha says, is "the recognition of pre-given cultural 'contents' and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism" (34), whereas the

recognition of cultural difference serves an entirely different purpose. Cultural difference, he writes,

> problematizes the division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory by a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic. (35)

The distinction between these two terms leads Bhabha to establish the concept of a Third Space--where the enunciation of hybridity, and consequently the rejection of the claims of a society to "purity," is possible (37). For all types of colonies, hybridity is extremely important in that it allows them to acknowledge what they cannot ignore, the influence of British culture, but at the same time give rise to a new vision of their own culture. All three authors here negotiate meaning through Bhabha's Third Space by accepting the influence and importance of English literature and by simultaneously acknowledging its limitations in terms of describing the postcolonial condition. Using a traditional English text to tell the story of colonization and its effects from a post-colonial perspective allows all three novelists discussed here to

combine the multiple elements of their histories in a powerful way. Desai, Davies, and Lamming all use *The Tempest* to reflect the undeniable influence of the European literary tradition in their societies. For Desai, this influence is something to be drawn on and ultimately surpassed in favor of a more accurate picture of post-independence India. The result is a hybrid text, deeply concerned with moving independent India into the future, yet at the same time longing occasionally for the "order" of colonialism. For Davies, the European canon and its influence create a dilemma of identity. He dramatizes a connection with the metropolitan center apparent in common language, culture, and ancestry, but at the same time demonstrates oppression due to the inferiority projected onto Canada and other settler colonies by the sheer cultural weight of the canon. Davies rewrites, then, in order to venerate and accept the English canon, but at the same time to create a unique Canadian canon, which may then be venerated itself. For Lamming, the influence of the colonial canon is oppressive and unreflective of Caribbean lives and experiences. In response, then, he rewrites Shakespeare in such a way that it becomes a language that can accurately articulate and reflect a colonized people that antedate the colonizers. These strategies of rewriting allow the post-colonial author to present an image of the colonized society not merely in opposition to the colonizer but as a viable artistic subject possessing complicated and varied ancestries and influences of its own.

Race and Imperialism

When one examines the history of British imperialism, it becomes evident that in order for the imperial endeavor truly to succeed, there needed to be some moral justification for it. A rationale was needed for the unprovoked, forcible takeover and possession of land belonging to others, not to mention the unspeakable acts performed in the process of such takeovers. In *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Patrick Brantlinger states that during the Victorian era most intellectuals and politicians believed that "wherever the British flag flies, [they had] a responsibility to import the light of civilization (identified as especially English), thus illuminating the dark places of the world" (8). This sort of "justification" for the imperialist mission followed Thomas Carlyle's view that "non-European peoples, especially those of African descent, whether former slaves in Jamaica or Zulus in Natal—can progress toward civilization (without, perhaps, ever reaching it) only through white domination" (Brantlinger 9). Focusing on the cultural differences between the colonizer and the colonized provided imperialists like Carlyle with many different binary oppositions through which they might claim superiority: primitive/modern, emotional/rational, feminine/masculine, pagan/Christian, plural/singular; even today such terms as Third World/First

World and underdeveloped or developing/developed are employed to justify the current economic imperialism of the United States and other countries. However, all such differences--cultural, linguistic, religious, and so on--have often seemed to be absorbed into the most obvious difference, "race" and "racial difference." Racism is not dependent upon skin color--the Holocaust and the colonization of Ireland certainly should be proof of that—but the belief in racial difference is a necessary factor in racism, and racism was a large part of the foundation upon which imperialism was built.

The term "race" has not always been used to describe differences in physical appearance. First used in 1508, this term originally rose from a general need to categorize and name objects of experience, particularly those that were unfamiliar. Lucius Outlaw points to three factors that gradually caused this more general usage to give way and be replaced with the usage it has basically retained through the twentieth century in which it is supposed to distinguish between groups biologically. The first factor, he says, involved the tensions within Europe arising from increasingly frequent encounters during the eighteenth century between different groups of people. A second factor, according to Outlaw, was the growing "need to account for human origins in general, for human diversity in particular." Finally, "the quite decisive European voyages to America and Africa, and the development of capitalism and the slave trade" combined with the other two factors to turn "race" into a

term specifically used to identify cultural differences (62). Biological difference began to supersede this usage when, in the eighteenth century, "evidence from geology, zoology, anatomy and other fields of scientific inquiry was assembled to support a claim that racial classification would help explain human differences" (Banton and Harwood, qtd. in Outlaw 62). As the classification of racial types became more common, the hierarchic ordering of such "types" followed. This hierarchy was typically seen as a "natural" progression, with the chain of being descending from Caucasian humans at the top, through dark-skinned humans at the middle of the chain, down to the least intelligent apes at the bottom.[22]

As George Stocking recounts, the widely accepted belief in the eighteenth century regarding racial difference was that all humanity was part of the same chain and that circumstances--accidental, geographical--stood in the way of some "races" achieving the evolutionary standing of other races (114). In other words, it was assumed that there was a uniformity to the development of all human beings, and that if no impediment stood in the way for a particular "race," its members would naturally be just as Europeans were. Stocking

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[22] Outlaw lists several people who contributed to the development of the popular racial type theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He lists Johann Freidrich Blumenbach, who provided the first systematic racial classification in 1776, followed by James Cowles Prichard (1808) and Georges Cuvier (1800), who classified humans into three categories along a descending scale from white to yellow to black (Outlaw 60-61).

explains that this "comparative method" led to human history being viewed "as a single evolutionary development through a series of stages which were often loosely referred to as savagery, barbarism, and civilization" (114). By Darwin's time, this rough hierarchy was generally accepted and it was also thought that those at the low end, the "savage races," would eventually be eliminated. As Darwin argued in *The Descent of Man* (1871): "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world" (qt. in Stocking 113).

Given this theory, it might seem almost coincidental that the "savage races" tended to be dark-skinned, while the civilized races tended to be light-skinned. Stocking, however, notes that while racial difference was not discussed directly, it was not ignored:

> If the Victorian evolutionists were not greatly occupied with discussions of racial difference, it was because in the re-creation of the overall pattern of evolution, the racial differences which had caused the lower races to lag behind or to fall by the wayside were not important. But differences existed nonetheless, and they were such that only the large-brained, white-skinned races had in fact ascended to the top of the pyramid. (120)

Stocking attributes this pattern in part to Darwin's argument in *The Descent of Man*, where he links himself both to South American Indians and to a baboon. Darwin thus places all humans on a chain which ran from ape to European, changing the connotations of terms like "primitive" and "savage" to include assumptions not just about culture and environment, but also about skin color and other physical characteristics.

Ultimately, Darwin's invocation of this chain united with evolutionary ethnology and polygenist race theory to, in Stocking's argument, "support a raciocultural hierarchy in terms of which civilized men, the highest products of social evolution, were large-brained white men, and only large-brained white men, the highest products of organic evolution, were fully civilized" (Stocking 122).[23] Stocking's argument here is convincing. While eighteenth-century and nineteenth- century scholars never made the argument that dark skin equals savagery and inferiority, the consistency with which the label was applied to dark-skinned people makes that argument more powerfully and more enduringly than any theory ever could.

The strength of this association was crucial to the success of imperialism, both in its beginnings and on into the twentieth century. During the first waves of British imperialism beyond Ireland, in the sixteenth century,

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[23] Polygenist race theory posited a racial hierarchy with Europeans at the top and evolutionary ethnology, the term Stocking uses for Victorian ethnology, attached a cultural hierarchy to that chain, also with European culture at the top.

the native inhabitants of the New World were seen much as Shakespeare presents Caliban in *The Tempest* in 1611. Caliban is "savage," "brutish," lustful, incorrigible, a creature on whose nature/Nurture can never stick" (iv.i.188-89). But is it because he is associated with darkness and dark-skinned peoples that he is seen as a savage?[24] I believe this question is of great importance here because Caliban has no "culture" that can be turned to for an explanation of his differences. He inhabited the island with his mother Sycorax, but never is there any indication of others of his "kind" from whom he might have learned his "ways."

Caliban is described in the list of characters as a "deformed and salvage slave." Because several elements in *The Tempest* point to the island as a New World setting, the reference to Caliban as a slave immediately connects him to African slaves in the New World, of which there were already many.[25]

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[24] I do not mean to imply here that Shakespeare intended to portray Caliban as a dark-skinned person or that Shakespeare himself was guilty of biological racism. Rather, as I will discuss later, Caliban's frequent associations with colonized peoples and with darkness have led to common assumptions, especially by the turn of the nineteenth century, that Caliban was the representative of colonized people and, thus, probably dark-skinned.

[25] Shakespeare read several pamphlets and travel accounts of the shipwreck by an expedition of the Virginia Company on the island of Bermuda in 1609. The name Caliban is also an obvious anagram of "cannibal," a word derived from Carib. In addition, Ariel's reference to the "still-vex'd Bermoothes" (i.ii.227-29) and Trinculo's comment that although the English "will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian" (ii.i.31-33) both remind readers of the New World (Smith 1609).

Prospero later calls Caliban a "freckled whelp, hag-born," but also notes that he is, at least, in "a human shape"(i.ii.283-84). Again, this reference to his skin color, coupled with the indication that he is at least part-human, would have reminded readers of either the dark-skinned natives of the New World encountered by explorers and settlers with increasing frequency or of the African slaves being sent there. Prospero also makes several references to Caliban as a "devil"; he says he is "got by the devil," a "born devil," and a "demi-devil." Since Christian iconography associates sin and the devil with the color black, a detail noted by both Outlaw and Fanon (Outlaw 62 and Fanon, *Black* 32), these many references not only strengthen Caliban's identification with dark-skinned people, but they also place him firmly on the side of evil and sin.

Prospero's final reference to Caliban, "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (v.i.275-76), serves a double purpose as well. This line again emphasizes Caliban's darkness and at the same time identifies him as one to be owned, further linking him with African slaves. It is significant that the actions of all the other characters in the play (all of whom are European) can be attributed to their place in society. Prospero and Antonio may act badly, but only because they are participating in a struggle for power. Stephano and Trinculo may get drunk and plot against their master, but they are servants and so their behavior is to be expected. While it is true that

Caliban is enslaved because he tries to rape Miranda, Prospero's comments regarding the history of his relationship with Caliban are significant. First, he explains why he has imprisoned Caliban. He says,

> Thou most lying slave,
>
> Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,
>
> Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee
>
> In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
>
> The honour of my child. (i.ii. 312-316)

Miranda then goes on, in her first speech to Caliban, to elaborate on his nature, declaring that all the efforts at "civilizing" him could never have worked. It is significant for our discussion here that it is Miranda and not Prospero that makes this speech, the only actual reference to "race" in the play. It shows that she has been taught well to belittle Caliban and to think of him as being in a separate category from her and her father. She says,

> Abhorred slave,
>
> Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
>
> Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
>
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
>
> One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
>
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
>
> A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes

With words that made them known. But thy vile race,

Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures

Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou

Deservedly confined into this rock (i.ii. 340-351)

As I have noted above, at the time that Shakespeare wrote, the term "race" did not refer to biological differences, or even to cultural ones, but was just a term used to categorize unfamiliar people or things. By "thy vile race," Miranda most likely means to refer to what she sees as his natural incorrigibility. However, it is easy to see how this reference could be misinterpreted to refer to biological characteristics as the belief in racial differences began to become more common in the eighteenth century.[26] But by the eighteenth century, when the term had come to stand for biological differences between groups of people, a reading of Caliban's character as a savage, dark-skinned native, incorrigible because of that color of his skin, was common. This way of depicting dark-skinned people would last for centuries. In fact, the English actor F.R. Benson, who played the part of Caliban in an1890 touring company spent time observing various apes in the zoo in order to perfect his movements on stage (Hunter 28).

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[26] Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says that the debate over "the nature of the African," that is, whether or not the African and the European were fundamentally related, was a hotly debated topic from 1730 to 1830. It is, of course, no coincidence that this timespan also saw the most profit being made for English and American slave traders and plantation owners (1581).

In any historical survey of the domination of one group of people over another, the idea surfaces that "looking different" is a far more common excuse for prejudice, enslavement, and genocide than "being different." Indeed, even in the late twentieth century, when many have rejected outright any biological theories of race, the concept remains with us as a way of organizing and categorizing the other. As Outlaw observes, "For most of us that there are different races of people is one of the most obvious features of our social worlds" (58). Imperialism, slavery, apartheid, segregation: all of these institutions and practices need justification for those who perpetrate them. There needs to be a reason why such domination of one over another is morally acceptable, defendable, and reasonable. Charles Shepherdson would argue that in working so hard to separate the fact of racial difference from biology, we have lost any meaningful way to talk about race. He says that when we reject "race" as a valid biological concept, we may then "shift the focus to *racism* as a social and political issue that we can place alongside class and gender and regard as a cultural effect" (44). But, he argues, when we do this, we might lead ourselves into a discussion of race as, for example, "the invention of a particular culture or the product of a specific historical moment," two things that race most decidedly is not (45). While in a biological sense, race is a fiction, our conversations are still "replete with usages of [the word] which have their sources in the dubious science of the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries" (Gates 1579). Gates argues that even today, "race" pretends to be an objective term of classification, when in fact it is a trope. It has become, he says, "a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or practitioners of specific belief systems, who more often than not have fundamentally opposed economic interests" (1579).

Shepherdson argues that the concept of race points to a question of identity that cannot be solved at the social level. He looks to several recent (late 1980s to early 1990s) medical studies to lay the foundation for this argument. First acknowledging that differences in death rates, heart disease rates, and the incidence of other diseases have been explained by environmental factors such as diet and income level, he then points to studies that suggest genetic factors in the inheritance of diseases and conditions. These studies, he says, point to a larger group identity than "family," to something like "race." He cites several examples, including that Native Americans do not metabolize alcohol as easily as Caucasians; that there is a *genetic* basis for depression among the Amish; that sickle-cell anemia occurs only in individuals who inhabit or whose ancestors inhabited malarial water areas. Many other diseases, he says, "circulate, not randomly, but in a way that distinguishes some human populations from others" (42-43). This does not mean a retreat to biological explanations, he says, but it does mean "that we

cannot adequately conceptualize race or sexual difference if we treat them precisely like laws, theories of selfhood, or economic policies" (45).

Fanon demonstrates how treating race merely as an idea cannot work in "The Fact of Blackness," an essay included in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). He says he was satisfied with his own intellectual understanding of racial difference and of its unimportance in terms of equality and superiority. But then, he says, "The occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity" (*Black* 109). Fanon goes on to argue that racial prejudice is fundamentally different from prejudice not based on skin color. Being black makes him "overdetermined from without" and takes away any chance he might have at being "unnoticed" either by others, or more importantly, by himself (110). He becomes a slave, he says, to his own appearance, and not to the ideas others may have about him, as he might have thought would be the case. After coming into this body consciousness, he can never escape it. This consciousness eventually leads him to "recognize that the Negro is the symbol of sin," a recognition that breeds self-hatred. For Fanon, this dilemma has two solutions: either he will ask others to pay no attention to his skin, or else he will want them to be aware of it. He says,

> I try then to find value for what is bad—since I have unthinkingly conceded that the black man is the color of evil. In order to terminate this neurotic situation, in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual situation, fed on fantasies, hostile, inhuman in short, I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged round me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and, through one human being, to reach out for the universal. (110)

In other words, in discussing post-colonial literature and theory, we must conclude that although there is no biological basis for categories of race and theories of racial difference, reality has demonstrated that the fact of race and racial difference cannot be ignored or abstracted. That is the reason why many post-colonial works seek to examine race in ways that focus on the universal connections of human beings while still accepting that history has created differences between the races that cannot be bridged.

Black and White in the Caribbean

Coupled with the isolation of the island setting, the plantation system setting created a sometimes volatile, sometimes strangely complacent situation in the Caribbean after the Slave Emancipation Act of 1833. As the slaves became free, their relationship to their former masters became extremely complicated. The intimacy of the island setting, combined with the fact that

whites constituted a very small minority in the islands, led to a sharing of language and custom not seen in other plantation societies such as the United States. Edward Kamau Brathwaite discusses the prehistory to this formation of Caribbean culture in *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*. He describes the process of initiation for slaves newly arriving in the islands as a "socialization." Not only would they be branded and forced to learn the rudiments of a new language, but also they would learn the social routines of the established slave groups. However, after becoming accustomed to this way of life, many slaves would then begin an imitation of the master, becoming "mimic-men." But he says, this "was a two-way process, and it worked both ways. . . In white households the Negro influence was pervasive" (300). He quotes from an anonymous author in 1790, who described young, white Creole women speaking patois and wearing the same kind of head-ties as their slaves, and he also describes whole communities in the country areas dancing to the folk music of the slaves and eschewing British food for native dishes (301-302).

This sharing of customs and conventions became especially significant when slavery was finally abolished in the British Empire. The island colonies began to fall apart due to the complete reliance on slave labor to run the plantations.[27] Many Europeans in the islands experienced financial ruin as a

[27] Eventually, the British Empire began to ship indentured servants from its

result of the abolishment of slavery, and so they lost what was perhaps the most important element that separated them from the now freed blacks—financial superiority. The result was a fearful, chaotic situation for the white Creoles still in the islands, further marginalizing them from their metropolitan partners and relatives still in Europe. After slavery, when they were living in run-down plantation houses, speaking the same patois as their former slaves, what was left to assure their superiority? The loss of capital blurred the lines of distinction between white Creoles and black Creoles even further than the Slave Emancipation Act had. For example, Dominica passed a bill in 1831 that granted "full political and social rights" to free non-whites, and by 1838 a mixed-race group that has come to be known as the Mulatto Ascendancy held a majority in the Assembly (Gregg 22).[28] Complicating the question of race in Dominica was the fact that this powerful group was vehemently opposed to any measures that would grant more civil rights to those of "purely" African descent (Gregg 23).

Further confusing issues of racial identity was the education system in the post-slavery Caribbean, which reinforced the dramatic influence of

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colonies in South Asia to work the plantations.

[28] Shortly after the Mulatto Ascendancy gained this majority, the whites formed a political group dedicated to fighting the liberal measures they favored. Though they even succeeded in having Parliament dissolved and new elections ordered, they were never able to successfully combat the powerful Ascendancy (Gregg 23).

colonization. The white children of the Caribbean were educated with a curriculum that posited Europe as "home." After slavery had ended, the black children were educated in the same manner. Brathwaite explains the effect of this educational system:

> [Our educational system] insisted that not only would English be spoken in the Anglo-phone Caribbean, but that [it] would carry the contours of an English heritage. Shakespeare, George Eliot, Jane Austen—British literature and literary forms, the models that were intimate to Europe, that were intimate to Great Britain, that had very little to do, really, with the environment and reality of the Caribbean—were dominant in the Caribbean educational system. (qtd. in Raiskin 8)

As I have noted before, this system, says Brathwaite, created a situation where children knew how to write about falling snow, which they had never seen, but not about hurricanes, which they had. This system affected both black children and white children in that they were all being taught in a way that was irrelevant to their surroundings. They were being encouraged to ignore the space in which they lived in favor of a never seen "home" across the ocean.

These factors-- the history, the geography, the education--worked together to create a condition of hybridity such as Homi Bhabha describes. As discussed in Chapter I, Bhabha's conception of a Third Space, through which all meaning must move, makes meaning and interpretation ambivalent (208).

Although Bhabha's theory of hybridity does not apply solely to colonial or post-colonial nations, the Caribbean does provide an especially striking example because of the absence of a stable native culture. In the Caribbean, Bhabha's "Third Space" becomes almost tangible.

The hybrid society in the Caribbean was unlike any of the other colonial societies of the Imperial age. J. Michael Dash notes that the very use of the term "Creole" to describe Caribbean society suggests this difference. Dash explains that the term has traditionally been used to describe a person, a language, or a custom that is neither native nor directly derived from the native culture. An entity is "Creole" if is created through the juxtaposition of divergent cultures. Of the use of this term Dash says,

> The term [Creole] already suggests the later hypothesis of creolization that the oppressed and the exploited were not merely the passive victims of an oppressive system but rather, through a pattern of apparent consent, opposition, and overt resistance, managed to create unprecedented cultural transformations from a series of dialectical relations that united oppressor and oppressed. (46-47)

Although this "unity" between oppressor and oppressed was, and is, far from stable, the effect these cultures had on each other is enormous and affects many significant aspects of Caribbean life. In a situation that poses difficult questions of identity for many islanders, language, religion, styles of dress,

music, and food, for people of all races in the Caribbean, are influenced and changed by the cultures and experiences of the other races around them.

The proliferation of novels and essays written by black male Caribbeans in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s brought the problems of Creole identity before the public.[29] As I discussed in Chapter I, George Lamming, C.L.R. James, Sam Selvon, V.S. Naipaul, and Aimé Césaire, to name some of the most well-known Caribbean writers and theorists, articulated, both in fiction and non-fiction, their experiences in their island homes as well as in the "Mother Countries" of England and France. At issue for these artists was the debate over the capacity of a plantation society to rise above its origins and create a new, sophisticated society, drawn from the elements of different cultures and capable of producing its own serious art. In 1956, the British novelist Kingsley Amis, discussing the West Indian novel, referred to it as an "experiment" and proceeded to spend the rest of the article throwing jabs at another critic. For George Lamming, this seeming inability to take seriously the West Indian novel is indicative of Amis's casual acceptance of his position as the "child and product and voice of a colonising civilisation" (30). While it is true that Amis was part of a conservative, reactionary group of 1950s novelists who called themselves "Modern Traditionalists," resistance to the novels coming

[29] George Lamming estimates that 50 novels came out of the British Caribbean between 1948-1958 and declares that this era signifies the birth of the Caribbean novel (*Pleasures* 38).

out of the Caribbean was pervasive.

Ultimately, one of the major symbols of this debate became the character of Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Several writers from the Caribbean have adapted this play in poetry, fiction, and drama. Lamming explains that he used *The Tempest* and the character of Caliban "as a way of presenting a certain state of feeling which is the heritage of the exiled and colonial writer from the British Caribbean" (9). For many Caribbean writers, the character of Caliban was an apt symbol and representation of their experiences—the slave who masters his master's language, only to go on, in Derek Walcott's view, to equal or better him in its use (371).[30] Walcott chooses to retell the story of another character from English literature whose "race" assigns him to the slave's role, Friday from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Like Caliban, Friday has been used as a symbol for race relations in the twentieth century, despite the fact that the original text is ambivalent with regard to the significance of racial difference. In fact, in 1992 novelist Toni Morrison chose Friday's relationship to Crusoe as an appropriate analogy to make sense of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's position in relation to racial politics in the United States. In order to do this, Morrison had to gloss over the fact that Friday was not black, but Indian, and one could easily argue that he was not portrayed, as she claims he clearly was, as either

[30] See Chapter II, note 2 for a list of several of these works.

"stupid" "barbarous" (Wheeler 823-24).

Crusoe and Friday: Race in Walcott's *Pantomime*

In Walcott's 1978 play, *Pantomime*, the black character does just as Caliban did, he betters the master at his own language and enables both himself and his supposed master to come to an understanding about their relationship. Here the complicated issues of racial identity are dramatized by the role reversals and conflicts undergone by two characters, Harry Trewe, the white owner of a dying resort in Trinidad, and Jackson Phillip, his black employee. Harry is a has-been English actor and wants Jackson to perform with him a pantomime version of *Robinson Crusoe*. He comes up with the idea that it would be more entertaining if they reversed roles, he playing Friday and Jackson taking on the role of Crusoe. At first, Jackson refuses to participate at all on the grounds that the story of imperialism is too serious to be made light of in this way. After he is drawn into the game, however, he begins to challenge Harry's ideas about race, colonialism, and performance.

Jackson insists on playing Crusoe his way, not Harry's. If he is Crusoe, Jackson figures, then he is in charge of the action. He plays the role seriously, and he even interprets the role of Friday (renamed Thursday) for Harry. Jackson understands that he is not a black man playing a white explorer; he is a black explorer and "Thursday" is a white, Christian islander. He intends to

have his Crusoe teach this Friday his ways, and Christianity and European culture will be banished from the island forever. Harry cannot take this version (even in rehearsal) and calls off the pantomime.

In Act II, Jackson works to show Harry that while he was trying to be faithful to this reverse retelling, he does not believe such a reversal is truly possible in the modern Caribbean, nor does he wish it to be so. Jackson's goal is for both he and Harry to accept the past and reach out to each other as human beings so that that past may not repeat itself—even in the performance of a play. He insists on finishing the rehearsal, despite the fact that the tension between the two men has grown to such a level that violence seems imminent. Jackson plays out Crusoe's shipwreck and subsequent methods of survival, forcing Harry to go along every step of the way. Jackson even goes so far as to strangle the "pre-colonial" parrot owned by Harry's predecessor, Herr Heinegger, and toss the body into the sea. The parrot has a habit of saying "Heinegger, Heinegger" whenever Jackson enters the room. Jackson commits this act of violence on the past, as the parrot is doomed to repeat it, and not toward Harry, who represents all that the British left behind. Jackson is angry about colonialism and slavery, but not at the situation that exists for him in contemporary Trinidad. He has stopped reliving the past, and he wants Harry to do the same. The death of the parrot and the end of their "play" allow both men to meet for the first time as human beings, not as master and servant.

Walcott's characters simultaneously echo and challenge Defoe's characters and their relationship. Like Crusoe, both Harry and Jackson feel like castaways. Conversely, both men identify with Friday in that each is subservient to the other at some point. Jackson is literally subservient to Harry in that he is his employee, but when they start performing the pantomime their roles reverse both literally and figuratively—for it is here, in *acting* like a slave, that Jackson has the upper hand. In Act I, when Harry begins his pantomime, alone in the morning before Jackson has brought in breakfast, he talks about a "lonely island" and pictures himself, as Crusoe, as a "single man" (93). He mimes the discovery of a footprint and questions it, saying, "There is no one here but I" (94). While Harry is, of course, reproducing Crusoe's actions from Defoe's novel, by having him repeat these actions Walcott is able to highlight the false assumptions of colonialists and explorers that the land(s) they overtook were empty and so there for the taking. Brantlinger points out that many English writers, even up to the early Victorian period, perceived most other parts of the world, even when inhabited, as being "virtually empty--'waste places'—if not exactly profitable areas for investing surplus capital then an almost infinite dumping ground for the increasingly dangerous army of the poor and unemployed at home" (25). Brantlinger even echoes Crusoe's fictional experiencing by noting, "If the colonists discovered footprints in the sand, there was little in that to impede the progress of civilization" (25).

Harry, the Englishman who "stayed on" after colonialism, still sings of being alone, as an explorer, even as he is now a member of a white minority and catering to tourists at an inn.

When Jackson finally agrees to participate in the pantomime and the role reversal begins, both players are initially uncomfortable, not with the characters they are playing but with watching the other man fill his role. Even at this level, which is no more than a conversation about a pantomime that might possibly be put on in a small resort, race prohibits an uncomplicated role reversal. When Jackson puts on the goatskin hat, signaling that he has adopted the role of Crusoe, Harry is uneasy and asks him to take it off while they discuss the roles. At this point, while Harry is trying to convince him to take part in the performance, Jackson has more control over the situation than usual, and this dynamic makes Harry nervous. He repeatedly tells Jackson to "keep it light" (112,113, 125) and advises him that it is just satire (109,125). Jackson initially feels uncomfortable with the role reversal as well. When Harry takes off his pants so he can feel "what it was like to be Friday," Jackson quickly assumes an authoritative stance to which he is not accustomed, telling him, "Put on your blasted pants, man! You like a blasted child, you know!" (102, 104). He explains to Harry, "[I] feel like an ass holding this tray in my hand while you standing up there naked, and that if anybody should happen to pass, my name is immediately mud. So, when you put back on your pants, I will

serve you breakfast" (103). Jackson is begging Harry to return to their proper roles not only because they make him more comfortable, but also because he knows that a role reversal such as this would not be taken well in the community.

Jackson shrugs off the worry of community standards, however, when he begins to feel real anger in explaining to Harry why he doesn't find *Robinson Crusoe* an appropriate story to satirize. Forcing himself to giggle while he delivers his angry speech, so that he can remain in compliance with Harry's order to "keep it light," he says,

> Three hundred years I served you breakfast in . . . in my white jacket on a white veranda, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib . . . in the sun that never set on your empire I was your shadow, I did what you did, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib . . . that was my pantomime. Every movement you made, your shadow copied . . .
>
> (*Stops giggling*)
>
> and you smiled at me as a child does smile at his shadow's helpless obedience, boss, bwana, effendi, bacra, sahib, Mr. Crusoe. (112)

With this speech, Walcott allows his character to announce to the colonizer, as represented by Harry, that natives have always been "acting" inferiority and ignorance. The speech encompasses most of the former British empire in its list of labels for the colonizer: boss (South Africa), bwana (Sub-Saharan

Africa), effendi (Egypt), bacra (Caribbean), and sahib (India). Mimicking the master has been a method of survival for all colonized people. But for Walcott, post-colonial people must move on from this mimicry to what he would call an "Adamic" vision of the New World. Walcott believes that subservience to the historical record or to what we have come to receive as fact produces a literature of "recrimination and despair" ("Muse" 5). The story of Robinson Crusoe, fictional though it is, has become a master narrative of colonialism, the very kind of history to which Walcott believes we should not play servant.[31]

Walcott has stated that "Crusoe is a figure from our schoolboy reading. He is a part of the mythology of every West Indian child" (qtd. in Brown 212). He has used the character in his poetry to raise issues of language, race, isolation, and the role of the writer. For example, in his 1965 collection *The Castaway*, he links the experience of the Caribbean people separated from their pasts with the experience of a castaway like Crusoe. In "Laventille," he says,

> .....We left
> somewhere a life we never found,
>
> customs and gods that are not born again,

---

[31] The story of Alexander Selkirk is a disputed source for Defoe's novel. Selkirk was a young Scottish sailor abandoned by his captain on an island in the Caribbean in 1704.

some crib, some grille of light

clanged shut on us in bondage, and withheld

us from that world below us and beyond,

and in its swaddling cerements we're still bound. (7-14)

The "we" in this passage could, of course, represent the Caribbean community, but the title of the collection and many of the other poems clearly invoke Crusoe as an exile forced to make a home for himself in a strange place--a situation Walcott sees as analogous to the Caribbean experience. Stewart Brown argues that Walcott sees Crusoe as an "emblem" for the Caribbean endeavor, moving "from the desolation of knowing himself lost on an island far from any shipping route, to loving the island as his first and only real home" (214). In a lecture given in 1965, Walcott said,

> Crusoe's triumph lies in that despairing cry which he utters when a current takes his dugout canoe further and further away from the island that, like all of uprooted figures, he had made his home, and it is the cynical answer we must make to those critics who complain that there is nothing here, no art, no history, no architecture, by which they mean ruins; in short, no civilization, it is "O happy desert!" (qtd. in Brown 214)

Just as Walcott identifies with Crusoe in the role of castaway or hermit, he stands in opposition to him in the role of colonizer or master. Because even

though as "castaways" they might have similar feeling of isolation and separation, Crusoe is still white and still the master, imposing his will and his language upon Friday. In the end Walcott is forced to admit, as he does in the epigraph to the poem from the same collection, "Crusoe's Journal," "Between me and thee is a great gulf fixed" (1).

Walcott's identification with Crusoe is obviously full of contradictions, and it does not allow Jackson simply to *become* the colonizing figure in acting out the pantomime. Jackson quickly sees that he must rewrite the story entirely, and his first move is to rename Friday by calling him Thursday. He then proceeds to rename everything he sees in "Thursday language." Just as Crusoe forced his language on Friday, Jackson tries to force language on his new Thursday. The table becomes "Patamba," the beach chair "Backaraka," and the cup "Banda."

The rest of Jackson's performance, which stops and starts many times throughout the play, is an exaggerated pantomime of Crusoe's shipwreck and coming ashore. Each time he performs this pantomime, he stresses to Harry the reality of Crusoe's predicament, ridiculing him for romanticizing it. In Walcott's view, Harry needs to stop reliving the past just as much as Jackson does. He dramatizes this need by having Jackson mock the speech Harry has written for Crusoe, which recalls Defoe's prose. The speech begins, "O silent sea, O wondrous sunset that I've gazed upon ten thousand times, who will

rescue me from this complete desolation?" (144). Jackson does not speak of sunsets; instead he emphasizes that his Crusoe will need goats to survive on the island. Harry has romanticized the Crusoe story and includes only poetic ruminations on the beauty of the island and the nature of isolation. Jackson, on the other hand, understands the *reality* of the shipwreck and the *reality* of survival. It is at this point in the play that Walcott's identification with Crusoe, despite the racial and cultural differences, is highlighted. Jackson says,

> "O silent sea, O wondrous sunset," and all that shit. No. He shipwrecked. He desperate, he hungry. He look up and he see this fucking goat with its fucking beard watching him and smiling, this goat with its forked fucking beard and square yellow eye just like the fucking devil . . . And Robbie ent thinking 'bout his wife and son and O silent sea and O wondrous sunset; no Robbie is the First True Creole, so he watching the goat with his eyes narrow, narrow, and he say: *blehhh*, eh? You muther-fucker, I go show you *blehh* in your goat-ass. (148)

Harry's version of Crusoe remains rooted in the past while Jackson's version moves forward, stressing survival in the present and hope for the future.

In keeping with what he sees as his proper role, Harry assumes the role of director during Jackson's performances and criticizes him in an attempt to regain control over the situation. Even in this informal improvisation of the pantomime, Harry cannot act the part of slave or servant to a black man.

Jackson's race is the significant factor here because we later learn that Harry once played Friday to his wife's Crusoe with great success. Harry can ignore the disruption of gender stereotypes for the sake of his "art," but the idea of a black Crusoe has him unable to perform. Jackson realizes this quickly and uses the situation to his advantage. He asks Harry to play a white sea bird instead of Friday. When Harry refuses, Jackson says, "I'm only asking you to play a white sea bird because I am supposed to play a black explorer" (120). Harry feels humiliated by this request and begins his many attempts to stop the play. As he protests the role, we see how far his prejudice extends. He says, "Okay, if you're a black explorer . . . Wait a minute . . . wait a minute. If you're really a white explorer but you're black, shouldn't I play a black sea bird because I'm white" (122). Harry cannot conceive of a black explorer—Jackson must be a black man playing a white man. Jackson reproaches him on this score, saying,

> I think it's a matter of prejudice. I think that you cannot believe: one: that I can act, and two: that any black man should play Robinson Crusoe. A little while back I came out here quite calmly and normally with the breakfast things and find you almost stark naked, kneeling down, and you told me you were getting into your part. Here I am getting into my part and you object. (125)

Harry's behavior does demonstrate that he has suppositions about what black people can and cannot do. As long as it is funny, a black Robinson Crusoe works, but when it becomes serious, then the concept is absurd.

Eventually, the sea bird role proves to be too humiliating for him, and Harry calls off the play. Jackson says that he will not leave what he has started before it is finished, accusing the English of doing just that by saying, "You see it's your people who introduced us to this culture: Shakespeare, *Robinson Crusoe*, the classics, and so on, and when we start getting good at them, you can't leave halfway" (124). Harry refuses to continue, however, on the grounds that "white would become black." When he forces himself to recite the specifics of the role reversal, with the imagined black explorer forcing his culture on the imagined white Christian native, he begins to understand the seriousness of colonialism –but only if he imagines a white person in the subservient role. Even after declaring that such a story would get "very, very complicated," he still doesn't recognize or understand how serious the history of imperialism is for Jackson. He tells him to return to his "role" as servant, clean up the mess, and put to rest all thoughts of the pantomime.

Harry's prejudice keeps him from participating in the pantomime and interacting with Jackson as an equal. The reasons for this prejudice are hinted at throughout the play. When Jackson arrives on the porch in the opening scene, he immediately refuses to take part in the play, saying, "I tell you, I ain't

no actor, and I ain't walking in front a set of tourists naked playing cannibal. Carnival, but not canni-bal" (96). With Jackson's refusal on the grounds that he will not act at being a cannibal, Walcott quickly injects into the play one of the central themes upon which racism, especially the racism that drives imperialism, is based. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe believes his enemies, and Friday's people, to be cannibalistic. He bases this belief on the skulls and bones he finds on the beach when he first arrives on the island and on Friday's statement: "*They no eat Mans but when makes the War fight*; that is to say, they never eat any Men but such as come to fight with them" (223). Ironically, as Markman Ellis points out, Friday's belief is the one held at the time by some scholars, that cannibalism had only a ritual function in Carib culture, serving only as an act of revenge after a successful battle (49). Crusoe, on the other hand, is convinced that the Caribs are drawn to eat human flesh through a combination of desire and scarcity of other food and that it serves as their only food source. Even though the existence of anything other than ritual cannibalism in any society has never been conclusively shown, the fact that Defoe's hero feared that he might be eaten by the original inhabitants of the Caribbean has had a lasting impact on the perception of tribal peoples, as have other texts that insist upon cannibalism, such as Captain James Cook's travel diaries and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The accusation of cannibalism in the Caribbean is especially strong because of this word's etymology. It derives from the word Carib, or Caribe, a people who have been associated with the accusation of cannibalism since the fifteenth century. Peter Hulme shows that this accusation is weakly supported at best.[32] Jackson will not risk being seen as the false representation of the Caribbean man; instead he will participate in "carnival" for the guests, a real Trinidadian tradition about which Harry is not interested.

Cannibalism is brought up again when Jackson works to convince Harry that colonialism cannot be made funny. Their exchange highlights Harry's ignorance, despite his own status as a minority on the island, of the history of racism and slavery on the island:

> Jackson: Hilarious, Mr. Trewe? Supposing I wasn't a waiter, and instead of breakfast I was serving you communion, this Sunday morning on this tropical island, and I turn to you, Friday, to teach you my faith,

---

[32] Hulme points to the OED definition of "cannibal," which reads, in part, "'In 16th c.pl. *Cannibales*, originally one of the forms of the ethnic name *Carib* or *Caribes*, a fierce nation of the West Indies, who are recorded to have been anthropophagi, and from whom the name was subsequently extended as a descriptive term'" (124). Hulme goes on to point out that the "recording" the entry speaks of is quite complicated and suspect. In 1492, Christopher Columbus noted, as he approached a particular island, that the Indians he had with him were afraid of some of that island's inhabitants whom they called "cannibals." They were afraid, he wrote, "'because these people ate them and because they are very warlike'" (125). Hulme then points out that the only version we have of this note is a "transcription of an abstract of a copy of a lost original." If this were not enough to call this evidence into question, Columbus received this information in a language of which he had no prior knowledge and to which he had only been exposed for six weeks (125).

and I tell you, kneel down and eat this man. Well, kneel, nuh! What you think you would say, eh?

(*Pause*)

You, this white savage?

Harry: No that's cannibalism

Jackson: Is no more cannibalism than to eat a god. Suppose I make you tell me: For three hundred years I have made you my servant. For three hundred years . . .

Harry: It's pantomime, Jackson, just keep it light . . . make them laugh. (137)

Jackson brings to the surface the irony that the British forced upon the slaves and natives a religion that requires they eat the body of Christ while continuing to associate them unfairly with the practice of eating each other. Also at work here is the metaphor of consumption. Walcott highlights the irony behind the fact that colonials had consumed the natural resources and the human population of the Caribbean for several centuries and now Harry wants Jackson to act literally as one who consumes human beings. Jackson will not play that role so Harry takes it over, more appropriately, one might say.

Because Harry's assumptions about race have brought them to an impasse, Jackson tries, in Act II, to find meeting grounds upon which they might relate to each other. Harry has proposed they have a drink, "man to

man, and try and work out what happened in the morning"(134). Harry seems to be intent on trying to work out the problems left by colonialism and racism so that he does not feel guilty about them anymore. Jackson reluctantly joins him in a discussion. Jackson tells Harry, "'Tain't prejudice that bothering you," and claims that Harry's real problem is loneliness. Jackson, despite evidence to the contrary, reassures Harry that he is not a racist but instead is suffering from a universal human condition that strikes people of all races. Earlier in the play, Harry has briefly alluded to his former wife and his dead son, and now Jackson hits upon this personal history, not the morning's failed play, as the real reason why Harry might be so bothered. Walcott has the native try to find the meeting grounds by which the colonizer and colonized can link themselves and become "men"—not just men playing roles. Jackson claims they must finish their play to achieve this end, as it is the only way they can truly face each other man to man. He says,

> [I]t go have to be man to man, and none of this boss-and-Jackson business, you see Trewe . . . I mean, I just call you plain Trewe, for example, and I notice that give you a slight shock. Just a little twitch of the lip, but a shock all the same, eh, Trewe? You see? You twitch again. It would be just me and you, all right? You see, two of we both acting a role here we ain't really really believe in, you know. I ent think you strong enough to give people orders and I *know* I ain't the kind who

like taking *them*. So both of we doesn't have to *improvise* so much as *exaggerate*. We faking, faking all the time. . . (138)

With Jackson's speech, Walcott implies that the history of the Caribbean must be dealt with not by rejecting the oppressive past but by rewriting it. Through the wisdom of Jackson's character, Walcott is also suggesting that it is the natives who must do this rewriting, because the English cannot. Their reliance on race and culture to retain superiority prevents them from seeking out the meeting grounds that will enable them to see the natives as their equals. What Harry does not realize, though, is that this assumption of superiority hurts him as much as, if not more than, Jackson. Walcott writes, "Who in the New World does not have a horror of the past, whether his ancestor was torturer or victim? Who, in the depths of conscience, is not silently screaming for pardon or revenge?" ("Muse" 5). By killing the racist parrot, Jackson obtains both revenge for himself and pardon for Harry.

White Creole Subjectivity: Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Although white Creoles share the castaway experience Walcott was drawn to in *Robinson Crusoe*, neither Friday or Crusoe offers a character that can adequately express the frustrations and concerns of whites in the Caribbean. Unlike Friday, they were never the slaves like Friday; they were

the de facto masters of the Caribbean. However, they could not find representation in the character of Crusoe either, for in a sense they were only overseers of the Caribbean, not the rulers, who remained in Europe. For Jean Rhys then, it was a text she had read in her adolescence, a text with an actual character of white Creole heritage that she felt the need to rewrite. To bring the white Caribbean voice to the forefront, Rhys chose to rewrite *Jane Eyre*—and to give Bertha the voice she was denied in the earlier text, just as Walcott gives Friday a Creole tongue of his own in *Pantomime*.

Jean Rhys's reading of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), which resulted in a text that stands on its own, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), challenges the Euro-centric view of the precursory novel. In *WSS*, Rhys forces the issues of colonialism into a novel where they previously had no critical place. In doing so, she forever changes the way in which we read *JE* and brings to light the former text's own instability and subjectivity of meaning. Rhys writes from the perspective of a white Creole, born and raised in Dominica.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys revises the story of Bertha Mason, the mad wife of Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*. Rhys creates a history for Bertha, making her a colonial of French and English descent with strong physical and emotional ties to her birthplace of Jamaica. This position is an ambiguous one, placing Bertha/Antoinette in the marginalized position of a colonial but at the same time, at least in the eyes of the white islanders, in a superior position to

the descendants of slaves in the Caribbean. Her mixed European ancestry only adds to this ambiguity. Antoinette feels that she belongs to no culture—not that of the English, not that of the blacks, and not that of the English colonials on the island. In telling her husband how the blacks on the islands call her a "white cockroach" and the English women call her a "white nigger," she says, "So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why I was ever born at all" (102). Antoinette's displacement is heightened by the fact that almost every facet of her life presents her with this borderline status. Her family was rich, then poor, now rich again. With her father dead, she has no stable economic status or social position. Given the likelihood that she will inherit her mother's mental illness, her mental and emotional health is also tenuous. The family estate, Coulibri, represents the most comforting home for Antoinette. At least there no categories are fixed and she is not expected to declare herself to be one thing or the other.

Rhys left the island of Dominica in the 1920s, and this kind of unfixed identity would trouble all her work and keep her from establishing a clear nationalistic identity. She was not British, but she did not consider herself Caribbean either. When asked in 1979 about her nationality, she was vague and noncommittal, refusing to call herself West Indian, English, or French (Plante 275-76). Although she resisted labels and names, she would not abandon the Creole identity entirely, and this commitment led her again and

again back to a novel she had read as a child. While she admired Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre*, she was always troubled by the characterization of Bertha. She voiced her displeasure in a letter to a her friend Selma Vaz Dias in 1958:

> I've read and re-read *Jane Eyre* . . . the Creole in Charlotte Brontë's novel is a lay figure—repulsive which does not matter, and not once alive, which does. She's necessary to the plot, but always she shrieks, howls, laughs horribly, attacks all and sundry—*off stage*. For me . . . she must be right *on stage*. She must be at least plausible, with a past, the reason why Mr. Rochester treats her so abominably and feels justified, the reason why he thinks she is mad and why of course she goes mad, even the reason why she tries to set everything on fire and eventually succeeds. I do not see how Charlotte Brontë's madwoman could possible convey all this. (*Letters* 156-57)

Rhys was troubled by Bertha's not being "alive" because she was a representative, albeit a fictional one, of Rhys's own class--white Creole women. Since its publication, great numbers of people, many of them young women, had read *Jane Eyre*, and Rhys could not reconcile her own knowledge of Creole society with this widely read (and widely believed) portrayal. That Brontë's character was fictional did not alter Rhys's insistence that justice be done for Bertha. In fact, it may have strengthened her resolve, for she believed

the link between fact and fiction, between truth and legend, to be an important factor in the images people have of themselves and of others. Rhys believed there were many "Berthas" and that in writing *Wide Sargasso Sea* she was rehabilitating them all. She wrote in an unpublished letter to Vas Diaz,

> this fiction was founded on fact or rather several facts. At that date and earlier, very wealthy planters did exist, their daughters *had* very large dowries, there *was* no married women's property act. So, a young man who was not too scrupulous could do very well for himself and very easily. He would marry the girl, grab her money, bring her to England--a faraway place--and in a year she would be an invalid. Or mad. . . So the legend of the mad West Indian was established. (qtd. in Gregg 84)

Because of what she knew to be true about Creole society, Rhys wanted to right the "Creole scenes" that she felt Brontë had gotten "all wrong." The obvious observation here, though, is that there are no Creole scenes in *Jane Eyre*. The novel is set entirely in England and the only reference to time spent in the West Indies comes when Mr. Rochester finally recounts the story of his marriage to Jane. Because she cannot "rewrite" the Creole scenes, because there are none, Rhys must create Bertha/Antoinette's entire story from the beginning. She is not reclaiming Antoinette so much as inventing her.

Critics have called this invention historically inaccurate and Eurocentric. For example, Kamau Brathwaite has called attention to the friendship between Antoinette and the young black girl Tia and has claimed that at that time in the Caribbean, a young black girl and a young white girl would not have played together as friends. He claims that Rhys's creation of this friendship is due in part to her racialist portrayal of black Caribbeans and that a friendship such as theirs never could have existed because of the ways in which white subjectivity in the Caribbean has been historically constructed over and against the black Other. Brathwaite says of Antoinette's death:

> The "jump" here is a jump to death; so that Antoinette wakes to death, not to life; for life would have meant dreaming in the reality of madness in a cold castle in England. But death was also her allegiance to the carefully detailed exotic fantasy of the West Indies. In fact, neither world is "real." They exist inside the head. Tia was not and never could have been her friend. No matter what Jean Rhys might have made Antoinette think, Tia was historically separated from her. . . (qtd. in Gregg 36-37)

Brathwaite makes this point in order to demonstrate his belief that *WSS* is not a Caribbean novel, but a European one. He believes this because he sees *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a "fictional statement that ignores vast areas of social and historical formation. . . White Creoles have separated themselves by too wide a

gulf . . . to give credence to the notion that they can . . . meaningfully identify or be identified with the spiritual world on this side of the Sargasso Sea" (38). Brathwaite's critique here, however, does not take into account several elements of the plot. Antoinette's family is very poor at the start of the novel; she has no one to play with but Tia, and their relationship could hardly be termed a true friendship. Most importantly, he does not mention the fact that all of Antoinette's encounters with Tia are narrated by Antoinette herself, a fictional character whose judgment is presented as being highly personal, not historical objective or "spiritual," as Brathwaite would have it.

Although her analysis of the novel is more demanding, Gayatri Spivak does agree with Brathwaite on the point that *WSS* is ultimately "bound by the reach of the European novel" and that the novel "marks with uncanny clarity the limits of its own discourse in [Antoinette's mammy] Christophine." The native figure that is embodied in Christophine, Spivak suggests, is too powerful to be contained by this novel because of the novel's inextricable ties to the European tradition. For Spivak, Rhys sacrifices Christophine just as Brontë sacrificed Bertha (272).

My critique of these positions is that both Brathwaite and Spivak seem to be working under the assumption that Rhys's goal in rewriting Antoinette/Bertha's story is to present a "true" account of the Caribbean. My contention is that Rhys, in presenting Antoinette's story from a different

perspective than that of Jane Eyre or Mr. Rochester, is not claiming "accuracy" or "truth" at all. She is illuminating the inability of different perspectives to converge into one comprehensive whole and articulating the particularly difficult subject position of the white Creole woman. Rhys's reworking of chronology, cultural references, and Brontë's plot suggests that, in rewriting *Jane Eyre*, she is calling into question the entire "Book," that is, the metatext of the hegemonic discourse of England. Rhys's own text, with its multiple narrators, is unstable, just as the Caribbean and the position of the white Creole were, both in the time in which the novel is set, after the Emancipation Act, and during the time of decolonization in the 1960s, when Rhys published the novel. Thus, by rewriting a canonical text, Rhys questions the "truth" and "accuracy" of the representation of the world Brontë created in *JE*. In order to demonstrate the implausibility and the "lie" of the English portrayal of the West Indian Creole woman, Rhys performs the cultural analysis that places Brontë's text into a greater discursive practice; she reads the earlier novel as a production of its cultural and social ethos. In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë uses the colonies of the Caribbean to give Rochester a wife. This aspect of the plot has often been seen as a minor one that could largely have been disregarded in the discussion of the novel's themes. In *Culture and Imperialism*, however, Edward Said notes that in the cultural sphere, British imperial power was "elaborated and articulated in the novel, whose central continuous presence is

not comparably to be found elsewhere" (73). Said explains that while the motivations of the British novelists of the nineteenth century may do little more than mention or refer to the Empire, nevertheless these novels further the idea that imperial domination is the standard.[33] He says:

> The nineteenth-century English novels stress the continuing existence (as opposed to revolutionary overturning) of England. Moreover, they *never* advocate giving up colonies. . . . The idea is that (following the general principles of free trade) outlying territories are available for use, at will, at the novelist's discretion, usually for relatively simple purposes such as immigration, fortune, or exile. (74)

Nowhere in Brontë's novel is the issue of colonialism explicitly discussed, making it a good example for Said's theory. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, brings this issue to the surface; and in making colonialism the subject of its own text, it changes the way the reader perceives the first novel as well.

Through the many references in her letters, we can see that Rhys intended her novel to create the history of Bertha Rochester. Yet the dates at which the two novels are set do not correspond. The shifting of dates, as Veronica Gregg explains, is significant. Near the end of *JE,* Jane is given a copy of a newly published book of poetry, *Marmion*, which was published in 1808. This would place the beginning of Bertha's imprisonment in the attic no

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[33] Said cites many examples here, including *Jane Eyre*, *Vanity Fair*, *Great Expectations*, and *Hard Times*.

later than the first decade of the nineteenth century. However, *WSS* is set after the Emancipation Act in 1834, and Antoinette is still a child. In addition, "Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair" was written in 1826 and Tennyson's "Miller's Daughter" was not well known until the 1840's (Gregg 83). Both of these works are referred to in *WSS*, but could not have been know by the characters in *JE*. In an effort to set her novel during a time in the Caribbean history when being white was most problematic, after the Slave Emancipation Act, Rhys is deliberately anachronistic. She does not merely intend to rehabilitate the famous English Creole gone mad in her husband's attic; she also intends to free Bertha, together with her real life counterparts, from the bonds that novel placed upon her. Near the end of the novel, Antoinette, stunned by the cold reality of England, the place she has been taught to call home, says, "This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England" (181). The "cardboard house" can be seen as the book *Jane Eyre*. *Wide Sargasso Sea* frees Antoinette from its boundaries in the end, and in doing so, symbolically frees Rhys's own imagination and experience

To free Antoinette/Bertha, however, Rhys must first reconstruct her island setting. In doing so, she may seem to be reproducing many of the stereotypes Europeans have had about the islands. The jungle is dense, exotic, mysterious, and sexual in nature. The blacks are mostly superstitious and childlike, and many of the whites are of low moral character, presumably

because of their lives in this jungle atmosphere and their close association with the blacks. Antoinette feels at home in this wild atmosphere, even linking the garden behind the dilapidated Coulibri with the Garden of Eden. She says that it was "large and beautiful as that garden in the Bible . . . But it had gone wild. The paths were overgrown and a smell of dead flowers mixed with the fresh living smell" (19). For her there is comfort in the familiarity of the island, perhaps because it is wild and mysterious. She has never known Coulibri in prosperity, so its ruin does not frighten her. For her husband, in contrast, the island is first excessive and then tiresome. He says in the days after his marriage, "Everything is too much . . . Too much blue, too much purple, too much green. The flowers too red, the mountains too high, the hills too near" (70). Later, after the couple has been at their honeymoon retreat of Granbois some time, he says, "We watched the sky and the distant sea on fire—all colours were in that fire and the huge clouds fringed and shot with flame. But I soon tired of the display" (88). His reactions to the island also reproduce a stereotype--that of the staid Englishman unmoved by the island's beauty. In *JE*, when Rochester describes the island atmosphere to Jane he is similarly unmoved. He says, "The air was like sulpher streams. . . Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hung sullenly about the room; the sea . . .rumbled dull like an earthquake. . . the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannonball" (338).

In fact, even the stereotypes of the blacks, some good, because they are docile and obedient, some rebellious and fearsome, because they fight their former masters or because, like Christophine, they trade in religious superstitions, are seemingly presented intact. These stereotypes, it must be remembered, are in Antoinette's head and are constructed by her to protect her own fragile racial identity. For instance, as a young child, she wants desperately to be friends with Tia, the little black girl to who follows her home one day singing "'Go away white cockroach, go away, go away'" (23). Antoinette is frightened of her, goes home, and hides in the garden. The morning after this incident, Tia is in the kitchen, having been brought there by Christophine. Antoinette then says, "Soon Tia was my friend and I met her nearly every morning . . ." (23). From the beginning of their relationship, Antoinette cannot fix Tia in her mind as either a "good black" or a "bad black." She admires Tia for her talent and indestructibility, saying, "Tia would light a fire (fires always lit for her, sharp stones did not hurt her bare feet, I never saw her cry)" (23). Antoinette appears to be transcending racial difference here in her view of Tia. However, immediately after the previous description, Antoinette says, "We boiled green bananas in an old iron pot and ate them with our fingers out of a calabash and after we had eaten she slept at once" (23). As Veronica Gregg notes, while Antoinette might appear to be moving beyond racial division, elements like this in the text insist upon it. Gregg notes that

sleeping immediately after eating was part of the colonialist stereotype of the "lazy black" and was even referred to as "niggeritis" (88). Imbedded as it is in Antoinette's adulatory description of Tia and their friendship, this reference to a negative stereotype demonstrates Antoinette's contradictory feelings about race and her own identity.

These feelings are displayed when Christophine gives three pennies to Antoinette, whose family is extremely poor at this point in the novel. Tia bets her the three pennies that she cannot do a somersault under the water, as Antoinette claims she can. She performs the task, or at least she claims that she does, but because she does it so poorly Tia takes the money anyway. Antoinette turns on her viciously, emphasizing immediately the racial difference between them. She says, "Keep them then you cheating nigger . . . I can get more if I want to" (24). Of course, Antoinette cannot get more, for her family has almost nothing at this point. Tia knows this and in order to belittle Antoinette, she focuses on this poverty and how it affects race in their society. She says, "Plenty white people in Jamaica. Real white people, they got gold money. . . Old time white people nothing but white nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger" (24). The loss of money has, in effect, made Antoinette's family black. As Fanon says, "In colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (*Wretched* 40).

Antoinette's identification as a "white nigger" is further strengthened by the fact that as Tia is taking her money, she also takes her dress. Antoinette must return home, where her mother has important guests, wearing Tia's dress, symbolically having switched places with the black girl.

Confusing and contradictory racial and cultural identifications such as this gives Antoinette little in the way of solid connections either to the island or to England. Rhys believed that, as she put it, there was "more than one Antoinette" (*Letters* 271). Because of the profitable economic situation in the Caribbean, many young women were married by their families to Englishmen who would then take them back to England, a place they had never been, where they would seldom be heard from again. It appears that Rhys wanted to reclaim one of these "lost women" and make her story heard (271). Why, then, would she choose to rewrite Bertha/Antoinette's story and add to a hundred-year-old novel by a woman for whom she had great admiration (271)? Why not write a new story, completely independent of *Jane Eyre*? I believe that she chose to focus on the earlier text because the English image of the Creole, both at the time Brontë wrote *Jane Eyre* and in 1967, when Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea*, was crucial to the construction of the Creole image of Self. Only by adding to, and thus significantly changing, an established British text of imperialism could Rhys adequately explain her difficulties of defining Creole identity for herself.

However, *WSS* is more than a Caribbean writer's treatment of her own country and its history. It is also a penetrating examination of the relationship between English culture and Caribbean existence. As Rhys wrote in 1958, "It might be possible to unhitch the whole thing from Charlotte Brontë's novel, but I don't want to do that. It is that particular mad Creole I want to write about, not any of the other mad Creoles" (Letters 153). In other words, it is this particular Mrs. Rochester, the object of an English imagination, that interests her. By making this figure the center of her text, Rhys raises explicitly for Bertha/Antoinette the issues of economics, gender relations, and autonomy that Brontë reserves only for Jane. In giving Bertha/Antoinette the subjectivity denied her in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys examines these issues also in the context of British colonialism, race relations, and international economics--issues that were only implied in Brontë's text.

In addition to examining the relationship of the colonial to her European ancestry, *WSS* dissects the historical and social methods by which whites in the Caribbean have been constructed over and against the images of blacks. To create Antoinette's identity, Rhys gives her a mirror image in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the young black girl Tia. At the end of the novel, Antoinette dreams that she is jumping from the roof of the home in which she is imprisoned. In her dream, she looks over the edge and sees Coulibri, with Tia beckoning to her to jump. This final image of Antoinette illuminates her ambiguous feelings about

race and identity as a white Creole, especially in the aftermath of the Slave Emancipation Act. Even in her madness, she still strives to connect racially and culturally with someone or something. England and Mr. Rochester have not provided that connection, and in the end she looks to Coulibri and Tia to do this. But it is my conjecture that Rhys also intends Antoinette to mirror Jane, even though this character appears only briefly in the later novel. In creating these links for Antoinette between both Tia and Jane, Rhys is clearly demonstrating the difficulties of Creole identity both in reality and in Victorian literature.

For Antoinette, her financial situation is a paramount concern from the beginning of the novel. Her family begins the novel very poor, and she makes reference to the fact that many of the colonials are "[s]till waiting for this compensation the English promised when the Emancipation Act was passed" and that "[s]ome will wait a long time" (17). Many English colonials were promised compensation after their slaves were freed, and many never received this money, causing them to fall into irreparable financial ruin. The black children call Antoinette a "white cockroach" because her family is poor, and she has only two dresses to wear. When her mother marries Mr. Mason, the family is restored to financial stability, but it is this position that leads to the burning of Coulibri. Because they now have money, they are seen as the enemy, whereas before they were of no consequence. In fact, it is her

stepfather's wealth that makes Antoinette eligible for her disastrous marriage to Rochester. When she is a teenager, her stepfather visits her at the convent school. He says, "I want you to be happy, Antoinette, secure, I've tried to arrange, but we'll have time to talk about that later" (60). Quite the opposite of Jane's, Antoinette's fortune is her destruction. Were she still poor, she would be unwanted and free to stay on the island.

For Jane, the issue of economics is also extremely important. She is an orphan and, like Antoinette, begins her novel with no social status. The aunt who cares for her, Mrs. Reed, treats her with undisguised contempt and allows her son, John, to brutalize her. John says to her, "You are a dependent, Mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not live here with gentlemen's children like us" (5). Jane's experiences at the Lowood School, to which she is sent by Mrs. Reed as an orphaned girl, reinforce the fact that she has no position in the world. The children at Lowood are starved by their patron, and many die from the unhealthy conditions and lack of food. Even upon entering Thornfield Hall, where she eventually goes to work as a governess, Jane is reminded of her economic dependence at a party not long after her arrival. Jane is forced to sit nearby while the women in the drawing room disparage governesses and say, within her hearing, that Jane appears to have "all the faults of her class" (191). Jane's lack of position also comes into play when she later flees Thornfield Hall and,

starving and sick, collapses at the home of the Rivers family. Only when Jane discovers she is an heiress does she have the courage to return to her beloved Rochester; only in independence can she go back.

Both Antoinette and Jane are shackled by their respective economic conditions, but Brontë gives Jane choices. As a poor woman, she can live as a governess or a teacher and as a rich women she can do as she pleases. No such provision is made in the case of Bertha. We are told of the fortune her father has given her--30, 000 pounds, and that is all. Rochester tells Jane that their families made the arrangements for marriage and that he was tricked; whether or not Bertha was tricked as well is never raised as a question. Rhys, however, brings this issue to light, making Bertha/Antoinette's difficulty in refusing the marriage clear. Although she fears the emotional turmoil this marriage will create for both her and her future husband, Antoinette lives with the memory of what happened to her mother as an unmarried white woman in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, Antoinette tries to stop the wedding, both for her sake and for his. She says, "I'm afraid of what will happen. . . You don't know anything about me" (79). Antoinette knows that her marriage is dependent on her inheritance and that aside from this money, there may be nothing to hold her and her prospective husband together.

In *JE*, Brontë reserves these issues for Jane alone. She gives Bertha no voice and reduces her to a specter haunting Thornfield Hall. Jane's description of Bertha compares her to a wild animal. She says,

> In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What is was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal; but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (321).

In giving Bertha/Antoinette's description of Jane, Rhys turns the tables and does not allow Jane to speak. Bertha says, "Turning a corner I saw a girl coming out of her bedroom. She wore a white dress and she was humming to herself. . . She stopped and looked round. She saw nothing but shadows. . . She ran" (182). Together, these two descriptions perform the same function. Having read *WSS*, the reader sees the "thing" Jane describes in the attic as a woman, and the description takes on new meaning. Rochester's imprisonment of Bertha takes on a new level of cruelty, and Jane seems duped by her devotion to him. But having read *JE*, the reader sees Bertha's description of Jane in a different light as well. Jane seems weak and naïve when she meets Bertha in the hallway and runs away. In addition, given her place in the last part of the narrative, she seems to take on a certain guilt in the imprisonment,

as do all the people in the house, because this is how Bertha sees it. But in *JE*, it is clear that she is not guilty, and certainly not weak and naïve. By giving deeper meaning to both novels, in the act of writing the latter, Rhys focuses the reader's attention on the subjectivity of the narrator and the narrator's values.

For example, the issue of British colonialism, presented explicitly at two different points in *JE*, creates barely a ripple in Jane's life. First, there is the issue of Bertha's heritage. Rochester's time in the West Indies with his wife is described in terms that render the Caribbean only in terms of its relationship to England. In Rochester's words, the island is stagnant, impure, and evil. He says, "This life is hell! this is the air—those are the sounds of the bottomless pit!. . . let me break away and go home to God!" (338). At first, he says, he thought to kill himself, but then, "[a] fresh wind from Europe blew over the ocean and rushed through the open casement." Rochester realizes, apparently, that God is in England, and it is there that his deliverance lies.

In Jane's relationship with St. John Rivers the issue of colonialism is also presented uncritically. Brontë uses India as a plot device, giving St. John a reason to ask Jane to marry him. As Said says, this device is evidence of the novelist's assumption that the "outlying territories are available for use, at will" (74). In *WSS*, Rhys does not exactly challenge this notion, but she forces a critical reading of colonialism into the first novel, demonstrating the power this sort of assumption can have. Rhys has Antoinette view England in much

the same way the British characters in both novels view the colonies—idealistically, and without criticism. Antoinette says,

> I will be a different person when I live in England and different things will happen to me. . . . England, rosy pink in the geography book map, but on the page opposite the words are closely crowded, heavy looking. . . . Wolds? Does that mean hills? How high? . . . After summer the trees are bare, then winter and snow. White feathers falling? Torn pieces of paper falling? . . . I must not think like this, I must remember about chandeliers and dancing, about swans and roses and snow. And snow. (111)

It is Christophine who challenges this notion of the mother country. She tells Antoinette that because she has never seen England, she cannot know that it exists. She says, "Why you want to go to this cold thief place? If there is this place at all, I never see it, that is one thing sure" (112).

Antoinette knows Christophine is right about England and what it would do to her to leave the island. Antoinette is defined in part by her European heritage, which Rhys demonstrates through the similarities between Antoinette and Jane. She is also defined over and against the blacks, as demonstrated by Rhys's mirroring of Antoinette and Tia. When she meets Tia on the road after Coulibri has burned, she realizes how they are both alike and yet still not the same. She says,

> I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not to go. Not. When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass. (45)

Rhys shows in this passage how Antoinette's identity is constructed by her relationship to the blacks on the island, but that although she has a Caribbean identity, she is white, a fact that displaces her from truly belonging to any society. She is not English or French, but because she is white she is not West Indian either. She will always be both a colonial and a Caribbean, yet she will never belong fully to either society. At her death, Antoinette makes her last attempt to perform this crossover into the West Indian world, leaping toward the image of Tia, trying at last to become one with her.

In rewriting *Jane Eyre*, Jean Rhys performs for Charlotte Brontë the cultural criticism absent from the first novel. This criticism does not invalidate the first novel's portrayal of Bertha but, on the contrary, adds a richness to the first characterization. Brontë herself claimed to be unhappy with Bertha's

character, accepting that she had dehumanized the Creole woman (Gregg 83). What Rhys does gives Bertha/Antoinette this humanity, and the manner in which Rhys performs this task implies that it was actually already there. By giving Bertha a past, and a consciousness, Rhys allows the reader to question the perceptions of the characters in *Jane Eyre*. In addition, because of the anachronistic use of dates and the historical inaccuracies, Rhys calls into question the perceptions of her own characters and, by extension, the "accuracy" of the text as well. By highlighting the instability of her own text, Rhys highlights the instability of *Jane Eyre* and warns against treating it as an historical artifact truly representing the conditions of colonialism.

In addition, *Wide Sargasso Sea* opens up for examination the identity of the white Creole, demonstrating the difficulties inherent in such a subject position. In the atmosphere of decolonization in the 1960s the white Creole's place was easily forgotten, partially because of their number in relation to the non-white population and partially because of their inextricable link to the colonizing authorities. Rhys shows, however, that white Creoles are also inextricably linked to the black population of the Caribbean and that this link is powerful and as relevant to their identities as their European heritages.

Chapter IV: Nationalism and Post-colonial Rewriting

Nationalism and the Post-colonial Novel

For all post-colonial countries, one of the biggest challenges of their post-independence existences is to find a national identity to unite the citizens and enable them to move into the future as free, autonomous entities. In order to discourage rebellion, colonialism purposely destroys, or attempts to destroy, such identities that might have existed prior to colonialism or have developed during it. Typically, however, this destruction is incomplete, leaving vestiges of pre-colonial identity in the form of language, religion, myths and other fundamental elements of culture that are difficult to erase. Yet post-colonial artists must recognize that this pre-colonial identity or culture cannot be returned to in full, in part because it has been "corrupted" by the colonizing presence and in part because no culture can ever be considered "pure" in the first place. What must then be sought is a post-independence identity that recognizes the culture of the pre-colonial and colonial past, both the celebration and the suffering, as well as the present, with the additions and subtractions to the culture brought about by the exposure to the colonizer and to other cultures. In addition, as Frantz Fanon has noted, in the modern world there is always a search for a national culture, unrelated to the presence of colonialism. The people of modern nations often search for evidence of glorious pasts to unite them and take them into the future as political entities—

without ever having been colonized. However, when colonialism is a factor, it tends to legitimate this search by inducing the native intellectuals to "shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped" (Fanon 154). So they return to the pre-colonial identity for inspiration, and while they may find it, the past cannot accurately reflect the culture of the people as they fight for and struggle through independence and post-independence. Because, Fanon says, a "national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (155), this national culture *must* reflect the influence of the historical fact of colonialism on every cultural aspect of the colonized society.

For the ex-colonies of India, Africa and the Caribbean the long-enduring assault colonialism waged against language, customs, religions and other important elements of the daily lives of the people inevitably resulted in the weakening or "watering down" of these elements—making it even more difficult to find a national identity once the colonizer had left. In addition, the very idea of a "nation," a concept that came to prominence in Europe in the eighteenth century, is, to paraphrase Benedict Anderson, all in the head. Anderson calls the nation "an imagined political community" and theorizes that capitalism and the printing press laid the basis for the types of national

consciousness we see in the modern world (6).[34] It is "imagined," Anderson says, because "even the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). It is imagined as a "community" because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). It is this sense of fraternity that Anderson says leads millions of people to be willing to die for these "imagined communities." He believes that it is the deep cultural roots of nationalism that have led to such colossal sacrifices. For Anderson, one of the most important components of these roots is language.

"Print-Capitalism," as Anderson calls the mass marketing of books and newspapers in the eighteenth century, gave a new fixity to language. It also created new languages of power—those dialects closest in form to the print language became the dominant dialects of the region, thus creating central languages used in society, business, and education (44-45). In this situation, language came to be seen as the personal property of specific groups—groups entitled to their "autonomous place in a fraternity of equals" (84) and thus deserving of the status of "nation."

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[34] Anderson also cites other important factors in the creation of nationalist consciousness, including the territorialization of religious faiths, the decline of antique kingships, and changing conceptions of time primarily due to technology.

Obviously, if the concept of "nation" is dependent upon language as a unifying principle, this presents problems for the inclusion of colonial territories under this national umbrella. India alone possesses hundreds of languages, some of them spoken by millions, some by a few thousand. Even when Indians acquired excellent educations in English, becoming in many cases better speakers of "proper" English than most English people, they were barred from the uppermost ranks of the Commonwealth administration, and they were also barred from serving in other colonies, such as Hong Kong and the Gold Coast, or in London itself (Anderson 93). Indeed, until after the 1857 Mutiny, India was ruled by a commercial enterprise, the East India Company, rather than by the "nation" of England or the Commonwealth of Great Britain (90).

While such racist imperial policies (among other things) prevented colonials from ever feeling as if they were fully part of a "nation," they did inspire frustration and help to forge bonds among the upper-class colonials in positions of authority in the Empire. Feeling alienated both from their home cultures, because of their immersion in English language and customs, and from British "colleagues," because of their status as colonials, led to the seeds of nationalism *within* colonized countries that would ultimately help lead to independence. However, when the colonial power finally does pull out, the remaining spirit of nationalism is generally not a good fit. The link between

the imperial administrative territories and the new "nations" presents multiple problems involving the varying cultures and languages of the people in those territories and how they will be organized.

Eric Hobsbawm notes that since decolonization, nationalist spirit in the former colonies has often been directed not against foreign aggressors but against the newly emancipated states themselves. He says "[T]hey [have] protested against the 'national,' i.e. ethnic, or cultural unreality of the territories into which the imperial era had partitioned the dependent world, [and] . . . also against the unreality of the western-derived ideologies taken over by the modernizing elites which inherited the former rulers' power" (153). To illustrate such western-derived ideologies, Anderson uses the example of the novel, rising to prominence in England alongside imperialism in the eighteenth century. He uses Walter Benjamin's conception of "homogenous empty time" to describe the sense of time used in the novel. The simple term "meanwhile" can be used to contrast homogenous empty time with Messianic time (another Benjamin term). In Messianic time there is an impression of the "simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present" (24). The present does not link the past and the future, but all three elements have *always been.* However, in homogenous empty time, there is a clear link from past to present to future—a chain of events. Thus the hero of the eighteenth-century novel

moves through the action and through time "calendrically" just as a nation, conceived as a solid community, "moves steadily down (or up history)" (26).

This conception of time, nation, and the novel is derived from western ideologies and often incompatible with cultures and traditions in the former colonies. In fact, Partha Chaterjee asserts that the whole idea of nationalist thought is incompatible with the process of decolonization. He says, "Nationalist thought, in agreeing to become 'modern,' accepts the claim to universality of this 'modern' framework of knowledge. Yet, it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture. It thus simultaneously rejects and accepts the dominance, both epistemic and moral, of a native culture" (11). This contradiction puts former colonies attempting to develop a national culture in a double bind. Given that they must accept what Chaterjee call a "bourgeois-rationalist" conception of knowledge, then any "assertion of traditional values would be inconsistent with the conditions of historical process" required by nationalism (11, 18).

A further problem with nationalism is that it can easily turn into anti-nationalism when those in power begin to imitate the imperial government. Corruption often ensues in the neo-colonial government because while those in power are of high intellectual and economic status, the indigenous middle class cannot match the middle class of the "mother country" either in education or in wealth. The resulting gap between those governing and those governed

approximates the colonial system too closely and gives rise to a strong anti-nationalism among the people. Just as the less-spoken dialects became marginalized by Standard English, High German, and similar forms during the rise of nationalism in the eighteenth century, during post-independence administrations the use of the imperial language or upper-class dialects or languages has been used to further marginalize the rural and little- spoken dialects and languages.[35] Nowhere is this problem more critical than in India, with its vast multitude of languages. In fact, in the north of India, there exists now a kind of Hindu colonialism that works to promote the face of India as Hindu and Hindi speaking. Salman Rushdie has gone so far as to state that the "well-being of the people [in India] might now require that all nationalist rhetoric be abandoned" (*Imaginary* 33). These problems, many theorists believe, are at least indirectly caused by the model of nationalism left by colonial powers that have vacated these former colonies but whose influence is inextricable from them[36].

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[35] While it is true that many ethnic groups are marginalized literally, because geography places them far from the metropolitan center, even when members of those groups move to the urban centers, they remain peripheral to the work of the post-independence government, largely because of their lack of knowledge of the language of the "center."

[36] Anderson, Hobsbawm, and Chaterjee, despite disagreeing on many major points regarding the nature of nationalism, all agree that nationalism and imperialism are incompatible for post-independence countries. They also that the system of nationalist thought given birth to in the West cannot be

A different situation exists in the settler colonies in their search for national identity both during and after colonialism.[37] Debates rage on in these countries regarding what it means to "be" Canadian (or Australian, or New Zealander, and so on). Because white societies did not exist in these countries in pre-colonial times, the only identity that can be "returned to" for white settlers is that of the mother country. This will not do, however, because despite their similarities in race, religion, and customs, the settlers were never considered truly part of the nation. Anderson notes that, like the Indian clerks and officials who were educated in England and returned to India in service, white colonials in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa were treated in the same way. They were "Anglicized" in the mother country, taught to be proper Englishmen, and then returned to Ottawa or Canberra to serve. Here they were treated as second-tier officials, unable to leave their country of origin in service (just as in the case of their Indian counterparts), unable to serve as Governors-General or Members of Parliament[38], and not part

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implemented in non-western counties without creating anti-nationalism.

[37] Of course, in the settler colonies, the designations of "during" and "after" are ambiguous—as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, while independent nations, all remain part of the Commonwealth of Great Britain. This is largely a nominative distinction, but it is important to note that the ties to the Mother Country have never been completely or formally severed.

[38] In the early part of the twentieth century, white colonials were finally granted these privileges.

of the "English-English" nation (93-94). For the settler colonies, then, a certain identity crisis must be overcome if any kind of unifying national identity is ever to be asserted.

Midnight's Children, Tristram Shandy: Nationalism and the Novel

For all former colonies, the problems associated with nationalism, both during and after colonial rule, muddy further an already unclear sense of national identity. What does it mean to be Indian, or Nigerian, or Australian? Does an Indian speak and write in English? Should she? What of a colonial who has been educated in the metropole? Can he ever return to the traditions of his country? Should he? One effective method of getting at the answers to these questions (or at least asserting the complexity of the answers) is to rewrite the canonical and traditional texts of the colonizer.

In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie takes on the enormous task of defining what it means to be Indian and how Indian history since colonialism has shaped that definition. It would be wrong to term Rushdie's novel a *rewrite* of anything, given its unique take on history, narrative, politics, and nation—but it does echo or "write through" another unique, complex work of English literature, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759). Also to be found in *Midnight's Children* are echoes of two

other important works, one the chronicle of a nation defeated in shame and guilt, Günther Grass's *The Tin Drum*, and the other the saga of a family living in a former Spanish colony now ruined by nationalist thought and corruption, Gabriel García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

The narrator of *Midnight's Children* (hereafter *MC*) is Saleem Sinai, one of the 1001 children to be born in the hour after independence began in India on August 15, 1947. These children were granted supernatural powers due to their auspicious births, and Saleem, due to his having been born at the stroke of midnight, was the most powerful of all, with the ability to hear the thoughts of others. He narrates his own history, the important events of which occur simultaneously with the important events in the history of India. His grandfather is present at the Amritsar massacre of 1913; he is born on Independence Night; his family's house is blown up during the Indo-Pakistani war; his son is born at the stroke of midnight on the day Indira Ghandi declares the state of emergency. Saleem represents India, and his confusing origin strengthens that representation. He is not the son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai—as they all believe until his tenth birthday. Due to a switch in the hospital by a troubled nurse (the Christian Mary Pereria, who will become Saleem's devoted *ayah*), Saleem is actually the son of William Methwold, a departing British colonial in whose home Saleem grows up, and Vanita, the Hindu wife of Wee Willie Winkie, a street performer. Saleem is at once

Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Indian, British, middle-class, lower-class—and he is also none of those things, since he is really Shiva—the son raised in the streets by Wee Willie. Rushdie has said that for him, the defining image of India is the crowd, "and a crowd in by its nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once" (*Imaginary* 32). In this multitudinous way, Saleem *is* India. As he writes his own history, he writes his country's history as well.

To see how *MC* holds up as a history of India, we must look at its use of narrative. Saleem's story is riddled with errors, some acknowledged, some not. Rushdie has made Saleem not just wrong about the past, but self-consciously wrong about it. Two chapters after announcing the assassination of Mahatma Ghandi, he says,

> Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Ghandi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time. Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? . . . Today, in my confusion, I can't judge. . . . I must finish what I have started, even if, inevitably, what I finish turns out not to be what I have began . . . (198).

By extension, Rushdie makes himself wrong as well. He relates that many people have "corrected" him on the many factual errors in the novel, assuming the mistakes were his and not Saleem's (*IH* 23). With a few exceptions,

however, the mistakes are Saleem's, making him a very unconventional type of unreliable narrator. Rushdie's subject in writing this novel was "the way in which we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool" (*IH* 24). Rushdie's use and misuse of historical fact in this novel helps to create a portrait of colonial and postcolonial life that lays bare the fantasies, the myths, the dreams, and the outright lies that keep such a system operating. In India, the Raj, as well as the post-independence government, went about the business of controlling the truth, of "taking reality into [its] own hands"; so for Rushdie, everything is suspect. Every memory, no matter how solid, may be false.

Rushdie's use of this blatantly unreliable narrator makes assumptions about narrative, narrators, and narration that help to place *Midnight's Children* securely on the list of exemplary post-modern fictions. To further strengthen this position, Saleem's tale also has a built in "reader." Padma reads his story as it is being written and comments on many elements—the content, the characters, and even the style of narration itself. She monitors his progress and reminds the reader constantly of the story's deviation from traditional narrative. Early on he says, "[H]ere is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next: 'At this rate,' Padma complains, 'you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth'" (*MC* 38). It is this method of storytelling, however,

that provides the reader with the first link to a novel written 200 years before with a similar style of narrative, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. This novel, though written in 1759, has often been called modern or postmodern. Sterne gives us a narrator (or a writer) who tells his own story in a complex, confusing, decidedly non-linear fashion. It is a work definitely not concerned with the "universe of what-happened-next." The author (Shandy, not Sterne) begins at the end of a story, moves to the beginning, and ends with the middle. He deliberately manipulates dates and other facts. He inserts, drops, and replaces the members of his family, including little Tristram, into the events he narrates in order to better reflect how he remembers these events—no matter how accurate that recollection might be. His digressions into topics seemingly unrelated to his life go on for hundreds of pages—after which he may or may not return to the original thread of the story.

Many see this innovative and frustrating narrative as Sterne's attempt to create a *real* narrative in contrast to the standard eighteenth-century novel with its logical, linear, orderly progression. In reality, people don't move through an orderly world in an orderly fashion—seeing the events of their lives unfold exactly the same way as the person next to them sees them. And they certainly don't remember these events the same way that everyone else does. We construct our own reality based on our sometimes faulty, sometimes accurate perceptions and memories—and no two people will ever tell exactly the same

story. Saleem and Tristram are both writing themselves into existence and thus into history, and many specific elements of the two novels link them first in narrative technique, then in purpose, then in the larger contexts of their commentaries on the historical moments in which they were written.

The first important link concerns each hero's arrival in the story. Tristram begins with his conception, during which his mother asks his father if he has remembered to wind the clock. Little Tristram is not actually born until Book Three, Chapter 23, and the author laments his inability to move any faster: "I have been at this six weeks, making all the speed I possibly could,--and am not yet born" (33). *Midnight's Children* also begins with a reference to a clock in relation to Saleem's birth. He says,

> I was born . . . on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. (3)

Here, as with several other points of similarity, Rushdie takes an image from the first novel, the clock, and marries it to an image that is decidedly Indian, in this case, "palms joined in respectful greeting." Coming as this does at the beginning of the novel, it serves to join the two traditions in which Rushdie writes: the Western narrative to which he pays homage and the Eastern heritage about which he is attempting to make sense.

There are many more minor or superficial points of similarity in the two novels: both narrators have incompetent doctors presiding over their births, with both of these births involving the mismanagement of forceps. Again, Rushdie takes a Western image from Sterne's novel, a bungling male doctor interfering with the natural process of birth, and infuses it with specifically Indian imagery. In this scene everything is infused with the colors of saffron and green, the colors of India's new flag: the doctors and nurses wear saffron and green, the lamps in the hospital burn with these colors, the walls of the birthing room are saffron while the woodwork is green. At no point is the reader allowed to forget that while the birth might echo Tristram's birth, the children being born represent the new nation of India.

Additional similarities in plot detail include both narrators being overly concerned with noses, and in Saleem's case, his nose gives him the power to hear other people's thoughts. Both heroes have accidents involving windows, and both have Uncles who play surrogate father roles in their lives. Through these similar plot details, we can definitely link these two novels—but the more important link takes place on a deeper level, in terms of how each novel treats history, historicity, and narrative and how the novels relate to each other in regard to these subjects.

To understand how the novels relate to each other and why Rushdie may have chosen this work for the foundation for his own "history," we need

first to examine why *Tristram Shandy* is often thought of as a modern novel despite the period in which it was written. In "Modernity, an Incomplete Project," Jürgen Habermas offers his description of a "classically modern" text:

> While that which is merely "stylish" will soon become outmoded, that which is modern preserves a secret tie to the classical. Of course, whatever can survive time has always been considered to be a classic. But the emphatically modern document no longer borrows this power of being a classic from the authority of a past epoch; instead, a modern work becomes a classic because it has once been authentically modern. . . . The relation between "modern" and "classical" has definitely lost a fixed historical reference. (qtd. in Watts 106)

Tristram Shandy has certainly proved to outlast the period in which it was written—indeed, it seems relevant even in the 21st Century. One certainly could not level against it the charge of being merely "stylish," as it is generally better received now than it was then. Its modernity lies in its ability to create its own category—to use the past, historical as well as literary, to create something that explains the present and the future. Despite its period, *Tristram Shandy* does what Habermas claims it needs to do to be considered modern: it "express[es] the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as a result of the transition from the old to the

new" (qtd. in Watts 106). As a child of the Englightenment, Tristram Shandy is oriented toward the future rather than chained to the past. The progressive and ameliorist view of history that underlies such an orientation is described by Tristram the narrator:

> Thus, ---thus my fellow labourers and associates in this great harvest of our learning, now ripening before our eyes; thus it is, by slow steps of casual increase, that our knowledge physical, metaphysical, physiological, polemical, nautical, mathematical, ænigmatical, technical, biographical, romantical, chemical, and obstetrical, with fifty other branches of it, (most of them ending, as these do, in *ical*) have, for these last two centuries and more, gradually been creeping upwards towards that Ακμη of their perfections, from which, if we may form a conjecture from the advances of these last seven years, we cannot possibly be far off (71).

Our narrator is trying, at almost breakneck speed, to move himself and his era into the future. In the process, he is trying not to lose sight of the present, an important, yet difficult task for modernist and postmodernist works.

Ihab Hassan calls the reworking of the historical past "presentification," and this term applies well to the processes taking place both in *Tristram Shandy* and in *Midnight's Children*. Tristram the narrator changes the past of Tristram the character by describing his past from memory, which is always

faulty, and by including digressions and esoteric personal opinions as they occur to him. As a narrator he leaves the reader with the story of a life that should not be trusted because it is non-linear, non-teleological, disjointed, disruptive, and contradictory. But like the lives that would later be described in canonical modernist works such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, it is precisely for these reasons that the account of Tristram's life should be trusted. Virginia Woolf herself noted about the narrative that "the order of the ideas, their suddenness and irrelevancy, is more true to life than to literature . . . [With this novel], we are as close to life as we can be" (qtd. in Watts 104). I suppose it could be argued that the playfulness of *Tristram Shandy* should preclude us from placing it a position to be the precursor to a movement as self-serious as modernism, but then it is its parodic nature that also allows it to be seen also as a precursor to post-modernism. Hutcheon, for example, sees parody as a form that questions historical authority. Parody, she proposes, works both "to enshrine the past and to question it" (*Poetics* 42). It is a move that may feel quite formalist, but because of its reflexivity, parody "paradoxically brings about a direct confrontation with the problem of the relation of the aesthetic to a world of significance external to itself, to a discursive world of socially defined meaning systems (past and present)--in other words, to the political and the historical" (*Poetics 42*). *Tristram Shandy,* modern, post-modern, and of course, of the

Enlightenment, contributes to all of these literary moments and proves very influential in all of them. Its style of narrative makes it attractive to the moderns while its strategies of parody make it a model for post-modern culture. For a work like *Midnight's Children*, Sterne's parody of narrative conventions makes for an especially appropriate foundation, for Rushdie will use parody in his novel to question history, art, memory, and like Sterne, narrative conventions. In addition, because parody questions the perception of the original as rare, singular, and precious, Rushdie is able to perform a kind of double parody and question the perception of *Tristram Shandy* as well.

For the purposes of my argument, how Rushdie uses *Tristram Shandy* as the foundation for *Midnight's Children* is not as important as why he uses it, or why he looks to any previous work to serve his story of Indian independence. The superficial connections have already been mentioned: the botched births, the clocks, the noses, the window accidents. The deeper connections involving narrative illuminate the importance of the pairing of the two novels. If *Tristram Shandy* is *about* anything, it is about the process by which we acquire a past and how that achievement shapes our present and future—which are, of course, rapidly becoming our past. As Carol Watts explains, Tristram's past is mediated by texts: "his very origin, the unrepresentable primal scene, is constructed by means of avuncular anecdote and an account from the paternal diary. He produces knowledge of his identity through the act of writing,

producing multiple selves and perspectives" (104). Saleem's access to the past is more traditional: his family tells him the stories and legends that took place before his birth. However, because it is not *his* birth or *his* family history that is being narrated, but rather Shiva's, "multiple selves and perspectives" begin to rise from this narrative as well. For instance, during the first part of the novel, before Saleem's birth, we hear the story of his grandparents, Kashmiri Muslims who do not technically "feel Indian" and are not sure if fighting against the British for independence is their fight (32). The story then moves on to describe Saleem's parents, Ahmed and Amina Sinai. Ahmed, as a businessman, believes in and cares about only what will make him money, and Amina remains in love with her first husband, Nadir Khan.[39] Shortly after Saleem is born, we learn that he is not really the son of this family he has been describing, but rather of poor Hindu street-performers. We then learn that he is *actually* the son of William Methwold, the rich British official who sold his house to the Sinais before Saleem was born. Although the confusion over Saleem's history and parentage is much more literal than is Tristram's, both narrators are writing themselves into being in order to gain understanding about themselves. For Saleem, this endeavor reaches fruition at the end of the novel when his son, who is actually the son of Shiva, is born. For little Aadam actually is the great-grandson of Aadam Aziz and the Reverend Mother, so the

[39] Remember also that when she was married to Khan, she was known as Mumtaz.

story has come full circle, and in so doing, achieved a kind of stability that had always eluded Saleem.

Even more important than this similarity in narration, however, is the way in which each narrator writes himself into being. Watts speaks of Tristram's self-identification:

> He produces knowledge of his identity through the act of writing, producing multiple selves and perspectives, staving off the death that seems to lurk at the end of every sentence, like Scheherezade, through the loquaciousness of his narrative. If the historical subject who is Tristram Shandy is finally to confront the limit of the black page, he will nevertheless achieve a graphic perpetuity by means of his textual progeny, his written self. (104)

Like Tristram, Saleem is also in the position of Scheherezade and has his 1001 Midnight's Children to listen to, protect, and, ultimately, remember in writing. Near the end of the novel he and all the children are robbed of their reproductive organs, but through his act of writing himself he ensures that they will live on. He also claims that he hopes to have "pickled" time and looks to the possibilities of the "chutnification of history." Sterne also uses gastronomic metaphors to discuss how we apprehend memory. He says our thoughts constantly float in the "thin juice of man's understanding" and thinks of his past as a time of "soup and salad, salad and soup." Rushdie takes these

references to food as history and gives them an Indian flavor—substituting chutney for soup.

Tristram Shandy writes the condition of the citizen of the Enlightenment, trying to navigate the changing world of the mid-eighteenth century. The radical ways in which Sterne allows Tristram to do this account for the lasting endurance of the narrative as an allegory for the condition of any subject attempting to reconstruct itself. In comparison, Saleem takes on the task of not only reconstructing his history but, by extension, the history of modern India as well.

Rushdie's affiliation with Sterne in a literary sense is fairly obvious—but can we also find an historical affiliation? Is there any sense in which *Tristram Shandy* can provide a seed for the post-colonial themes of *Midnight's Children?* If we examine together the rise of the novel and the height of British expansion into foreign territories, we can see some correlations between the two endeavors. Further, when we examine *Tristram Shandy*'s place in the canon of the eighteenth-century novel, in comparison with the view of nationalism put forth in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's use of the earlier novel becomes even more appropriate. The novel, as a new form of literature, made its greatest strides in England in the eighteenth century with the works of the oft-cited trio of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Some of the important elements that distinguish the novel of the early eighteenth century

from earlier forms include a focus on individual experience; an emphasis on originality; a move towards realism, with particular characters in particular circumstances acting out the plot; a use of time that forced a linear progression from beginning to middle to end, with attention given to the actual passing of clock and calendar time in the story; space as the correlative of this new concept of time, with place becoming very specific and reflective of an actual physical environment; and the adoption of a new prose style that aimed to give all the other elements a final air of authenticity—to give readers the feeling they were reading real stories about real people (Watt 13-30). These innovations in literature created a typical example such as *Joseph Andrews* or *Robinson Crusoe*, with a hero moving progressively through the action of the plot, which was being narrated by an omniscient, reliable narrator. This action was presented in homogenous empty time, a conception of time that is decidedly linear and teleological.

It is not coincidental that the rise of the novel and the rise of imperialism should occur alongside one another. Ideologically, imperialism depends on the concept of a nation, like the hero of a novel, moving progressively through time, goal-oriented and linear. As I have noted above, Benedict Anderson links the novel and nationalism by pointing to this comparison. In order that a nation may be successful, Anderson believes, there

must be a concept of the country as a "solid community moving steadily down (or up) history"(26).[40]

Rushdie quotes Anderson in discussing writing and nationalism and shows his post-colonial sympathies by saying that "good" writers insist on having it both ways, on expressing at the same time "the truths of simultaneity and those of linearity" (*IH* 382). An additional link between nationalism and the novel involves narration. Nationalist movements seem to take on the narrator-like omniscient presence of a divine being guiding and giving authority to the national endeavors. Saleem (and Tristram) want to have it both ways here as well—being at once Godlike and all knowing, yet fallible and suspect.

Before examining how this concept of a nation applies to *Midnight's Children*, we should examine how well *Tristram Shandy* fits into the description of the novel above. It certainly does not appear to be teleological or linear, with its many interruptions and digressions. There is no omniscient narrator to rely upon; instead, the highly suspect Tristram himself narrates his

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[40] Anderson says, for example, "An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (26). Obviously, to conceive of itself as a nation, a group of people needs more than just this conception of themselves moving through time. For example, geographical proximity, technology that enables communication, and ethnic affiliation of most of the members are all-important components. Anderson's point here is that a "nation" cannot conceive of itself as anything but a "solid community" moving chronologically.

life. Sterne also "borrows" quite a bit from previous works—destroying any notion of originality for many of his contemporaries who criticized the novel.[41] For Sterne, and for most critics now, these breaks from the standard of the day make *Tristram Shandy* a *more* "realistic" novel, because they construct a subject with thoughts and impressions and opinions that approximate quite closely the way real people think and remember and tell stories. However, the many deviations from the then current standard have caused critics writing as late as Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* to call *Tristram Shandy* "not so much a novel as a parody of the novel" (290).[42] Consequently, this novel can be seen both as the least representative novel of the genre's rise in the eighteenth century, as well as the best, most successful attempt at realism of that century (or the next).

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's attempt to show the failures of nationalism while at the same time realistically narrating the history of modern India creates a similar contradictory position for the novel. Rushdie would probably accept Anderson's description of what a nation must be, of how it would conceive of itself. He also appreciates Anderson's connection of the novel and the nation, stating that "this [Anderson's comparison of nationalism

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[41] We now see *Tristram Shandy* as being highly original—it was because of its status as a parody of the novel that many critics of the day saw it as plagiarism.

[42] I use Watt here, instead of more recent theorists of the English novel to show that as late as the 1960s *Tristram Shandy* was not seen as "a novel."

and novel writing] is important stuff for a novelist, because what we are being told is that the idea of sequence, of narrative, of society as a story, is essential to the creation of nations" (*IH* 382). However, for India, that conception simply will not work. India is too pluralized, too populous, and too diverse to ever be able to successfully move ahead with a conception of itself as a whole, unified entity. Rushdie would agree with Chaterjee's statement that "nationalism as an ideology is irrational, narrow, hateful, and destructive" (7). It necessarily excludes those on the periphery and also ignores difference. Rushdie states,

> For a nation of seven hundred millions to make any kind of sense, it must base itself firmly on the concept of multiplicity, of plurality and tolerance, of devolution and decentralization wherever possible. There can be no one way—religious, cultural, or linguistic—of being an Indian; let difference reign. (*IH* 44)

This vision is precisely why Saleem represents, all at once, so many cultures, religions, languages, and people. He is India, with the 1001 other midnight's children all contained within his head. However, if Rushdie's novel is anti-nationalist, it is also hopeful, with the last chapter suggesting a new generation, led perhaps by Saleem's son, Aadam Sinai, who will embody a more tolerant, pragmatic approach to India's future.

The Satanic Verses and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Religious Imperialism and the Novel

Midnight's Children is not the only novel in which Rushdie appropriates the work of a earlier canonical author. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is primarily the story of Saladin Chamcha's quest for wholeness, personal, cultural, and spiritual. He falls from the sky, literally, and is then transformed, literally, into a goat-like devil. During this transformation Saladin is able to recover his own personal past and deal with his religious and cultural identity. In this respect, and in other more specific ways, it echoes James Joyce: specifically *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Finnegans Wake* (1931).

Joyce's work engages his characters in journeys of self-discovery, even if the journeys are fruitless. Like Saladin, Joyce's heroes often find themselves struggling to reconcile their ethnicity with their intellect and their spirituality with their reason. In *Portrait*, for example, Stephen Dedalus undergoes several transformations, from naïve schoolboy, to guilt-ridden teenager imprisoned by the oppressive Catholicism of Ireland, to logical yet spiritually dead university student, and finally to the young man who will become an artist.

The "Ellowen Deeowen" section of *The Satanic Verses* echoes Stephen's transformation in several ways. In this section, Saladin discovers to his horror that he is slowly becoming a goat, during which process he is arrested and placed in a hospital. He learns here that there are many others of his kind. The

manticore, half-man, half-tiger, tells him how they are transformed: "'They describe us,' the other whispered solemnly. 'That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct'" (168). They, the imperial power, have made animals of their former colonial subjects, and they are beginning to believe these terrible descriptions--especially when they are in the metropolitan center, London, the only source of power for the now dead Empire.

Joyce's Stephen is similarly "described" by another foreign master, the Roman Catholic church.[43] After the blistering sermon at the retreat, he feels himself being turned into an animal as well:

> He ate his dinner with surly appetite and, when the meal was over and the greasestrewn plates lay abandoned on the table, he rose and went to the window, clearing the thick scum from his mouth with his tongue and licking it from his lips. So he had sunk to the state of a beast that licks his chaps after meat (*Portrait* 111).

Gradually, just as Saladin's literal transformation takes place, Stephen feels increasingly beast-like as he allows himself to descend further into the contemplation of his sinful nature. He has been told to reflect on four themes, death, judgment, hell, and heaven (109), and as he does so he becomes

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[43] Later, in *Ulysses*, Stephen will say, "I am the servant of two masters, an English and an Italian." He is referring to, he later explains, "The imperial British state and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church" (20).

repulsed by his own status as a sinful being, convincing himself he is doomed to hell for his sins. He envisions his human form dying, with "the bright centres of the brain extinguished one by one like lamps" and "the speech thickening and wandering and failing"(112). Imagining his fate after death, he thinks that "like a beast in its lair his soul had lain down in its own filth, but the blasts of the angel's trumpet had driven him forth from the darkness of sin into the light" (115). For his part, Saladin is forced to live the fate Stephen only imagines when he is forced to eat his own filth by police officers, the imperial agents who see nothing unusual about the goat-man lying before them.

Throughout the "Ellowen Deeowen" section of *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie echoes Stephen's imaginary descent into hell by having Saladin literally undergo the tortures Stephen imagines. We can see this connection most strongly in the description of the monsters' escape from the Detention Center. As the monsters flee into the London darkness, Saladin sees the entire crowd for the first time:

> There were many shadowy figures running through the glowing night, and Chamcha glimpsed beings he never could have imagined, men and women who were also partially plants, or giant insects . . . there were men with rhinoceros horns instead of noses and women with necks as long as any giraffe. The monsters ran quickly, silently, to the edge of the Detention Centre compound . . . and then they were out, free, going

their separate ways, without hope, but also without shame. (*Satanic* 171)

They are free, but this freedom means nothing for their futures, or the futures of many immigrants from the colonies to the metropolitan center. Without shame but also without hope, the diaspora assimilates into the streets of the capital. A comparison to a similar passage in *Portrait* demonstrates Rushdie's desire to link this condition with the religious prison into which Stephen is driven: "Creatures were in the field; one, three, six: creatures were moving in the field, hither and thither. Goatish creatures with human faces, hornybrowed, lightly bearded and grey as indiarubber. The malice of evil glittered in their hard eyes, as they moved hither and thither, trailing their long tails behind them" (*Portrait* 137). The creatures in Stephen's vision are animal-like, as they are in *TSV*, but here they represent evil, whereas in the later work the creatures themselves appear be innocent. However, by succumbing to the descriptions imperialism has imposed upon them, they too become agents of evil, just like the creatures sentenced to hell in Stephen's vision.

The exposure of the colonial subject to the metropolitan center is blamed in part for both Stephen's imaginary fall from grace and Saladin's actual one. During Stephen's descent, he sees the city of Dublin as an enemy: "The letters of the name of Dublin lay heavily upon his mind, pushing one

another surlily hither and thither with slow boorish insistence" (111).[44] Saladin's condition and his punitive treatment are blamed on a city as well, and the letters in the name of London are exaggerated by the title of the section, "Ellowen Deeowen." Just as the letters of Dublin oppress Stephen, the letters here literally push against each other as they are forced to form words-- the city lies so heavily upon Saladin that it makes it difficult for him to find a place to hide or even to rest.

The literal agents of the city, the immigration agents and the police, beat Saladin, call him names, and force him to eat his own excrement, all because they believe him to be an illegal immigrant. While they engage in this beating, they discuss two bastions of English popular culture, football and television. Ironically, Saladin himself is a force in the pop culture of the London scene, playing a space alien on a popular television show. He is also the most popular voice-over actor in the city. For Saladin, with his English wife and his secure place in the culture of his adopted city, the treatment he receives from the officials comes as a shock. When they arrest him, he asks them, without irony, "Don't any of you watch TV? Don't you see? I'm Maxim. Maxim Alien" (140). Saladin feels he is thoroughly British, despite his race and origin, but as his wife explains, he clearly misunderstands what it means to be British. She says, "Him and his Royal Family, you wouldn't

[44] Dublin, the largest city in Ireland, acts here as a substitute for London, the actual center of the empire.

believe. Cricket, the Houses of Parliament, the Queen. The place never stopped being a picture postcard to him. You couldn't get him to look at what was really real" (175). The officers don't see him as anything but an "animal" trying to invade their country's beloved shores—thus their lack of surprise that he is becoming an actual animal before their eyes. What Saladin begins to see here is that no degree of assimilation can ever erase his true "alienness" in the eyes of most Londoners. It is this realization that begins the process of transformation that he has so long resisted.

A final, deeper connection between *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *The Satanic Verses* lies in the two novels' focus on the tyrannical nature of religion, particularly in Ireland and India. When *The Satanic Verses* was published, it was, as is well known, declared by Islamic fundamentalists to be blasphemous.[45] The idea that Mohamed, upon dictating the Koran, might

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[45] *The Satantic Verses* was banned immediately upon its publication in India and South Africa. On February 14, 1989 the Ayatollah Khomeini called on all zealous Muslims to execute the writer and the publishers of the book, and Rushdie was forced into hiding. In addition, an aide to Khomeini offered a million-dollar reward for Rushdie's death. In 1997 the prize was doubled, and the next year the highest Iranian state prosecutor renewed the death sentence. During this period of *fatwa* violent protest in India, Pakistan, and Egypt caused several deaths. In 1990 Rushdie published an essay, "In Good Faith" (which I quote here from *Imaginary Homelands*), to appease his critics and issued an apology in which he reaffirmed his respect for Islam. However, Iranian clerics have never repudiated their death threat.

not have had pure motives shakes the foundations of Islam. That this alternate story should be created by Rushdie, a Muslim himself, was even more damning to the novel. However, as Rushdie has noted many times, he does not practice Islam (or any religion) and has not for some time. Like Stephen Dedelaus, Rushdie lost his faith as a young man. He says,

> To put it as simply as possible: *I am not a Muslim*. It feels bizarre, and wholly inappropriate, to be described as some sort of heretic after having lived my life as a secular, pluralist, eclectic man. . . I do not accept the charge of blasphemy, because, as somebody says in *The Satanic Verses*, "where there is no belief, there is no blasphemy." I do not accept the charge of apostasy, because I have never in my adult life affirmed any belief, and what one has not affirmed one cannot be said to be apostatized from. (*IH* 403)

Rushdie continues today to assert that this novel was not meant to damn Islam but, in part, to cause readers to question the validity of any religion's rules. More important to him was the novel's central theme of the quest for wholeness, which both Saladin and Gibreel undertake. The many suggestions regarding the heterogeneous nature of humanity and the hybrid "mongrel" that every human is underscore this quest. To be whole, the novel seems to be saying, one must accept both the angelic and the satanic within. Rushdie was

trying, he says, to reclaim the word "devil" for the migrant cultures who often have the word used against them by others.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man also has as its central theme a quest for wholeness, and Stephen's journey towards this wholeness also leads him to question the rules of religion and their application in life. Stephen will not take communion during Mass because of the extreme doubts by which he is constantly beset. Cranly asks him why he fears "a bit of bread" if he does not believe it is the "body and blood of the son of God." He answers, "I fear the chemical action which would be set up in my soul by a false homage to a symbol behind which are amassed twenty centuries of authority and veneration" (243). Stephen ultimately rejects the Catholic Church and its spiritual enslavement of the Irish people in search of a truer sense of what it means to be Irish and to be human. In "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages," Joyce elaborates of this spiritual enslavement. He says Ireland has been "the most faithful daughter of the Catholic church" and that for "six or eight centuries" the island was the "spiritual focus of Christianity." The Church, Joyce says, has "repaid this fidelity in its own way":

> First, by means of a papal bull and a ring, it gave Ireland to Henry II of England, and later, in the papacy of Gregory XIII, when the Protestant heresy raised its head, it repented having given faithful Ireland to the English heretics, and to redeem the error, it named a bastard of the papal

> court as supreme ruler of Ireland. . . . Ireland's compliance is so complete that it would hardly murmur if tomorrow the pope, having already turned it over to an Englishman and an Italian, were to turn their island over to some *hidalgo* of the court of Alphonso, who found himself momentarily unemployed. (*Critical* 169-170)[46]

In *Portrait,* Stephen says of the Church, "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning" (247). He takes this course of action, he says in the last line of the novel, "to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (253). Similarly, Rushdie has said that he hopes *The Satanic Verses* is a work of "radical dissent and questioning and reimagining" (*IH* 395). While the passages I have quoted above link these works formally, these thematic similarities are even more important. Both writers are concerned with nations that have been, and continue to be, severely troubled by religious conflict. In addition, both men expatriated from their home countries at relatively young ages, leaving because they could not participate in the

[46] The "bastard of the papal court" Joyce refers to is probably Gregory XIII's illegitimate son, Giacomo Buoncompagno and "Alphonso" is Alphonso XIII, King of Spain.

religion-driven nationalist movements that occurred in Ireland before Independence and in India during the partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1970. Both works aim to reflect the true nature of their respective cultures and to do so by questioning and critically examining the oppressive nature of organized religion and how that institution affected the nature of colonialism in their countries.

Jack Maggs and *Great Expectations*: Australian Nationalism and the Creation of Stereotypes

Nationalism and issues of national identity in the settler colonies can be just as complex as in India, but in different ways and for different reasons. First of all, loyalty to England holds sway over nationalism for many Australians. Being linked to the motherland in race, language, and customs was an important cornerstone for many of Australia's early settlers and remains so today. Even Australian nationalism, until the later part of the twentieth century, was often not in opposition to British imperialism, as would seem logical, but rather contributed to and was contained by that imperialism (Cesar 149). However, Australia's beginnings as a penal colony have left a deep impact on the country and complicate its identification with England. Many white Australians are the descendents of the discarded Englishmen and Irishmen sent to New South Wales to be punished and exiled there for life.

In Peter Carey's 1997 novel, *Jack Maggs*, this penal history plays an important role in Carey's depiction of the title character. Jack Maggs is a version of Abel Magwitch, Pip's benefactor in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861). Carey gives us Maggs's life story gradually in flashback, using the same technique Dickens uses to reveal Magwitch's past to Pip. Also like Dickens, Carey uses that difficult past to explain the ex-convict's actions in the present. In both novels, he was brought up, literally, to steal and cheat. In both novels, he falls in love with a fellow thief and takes the sentence of exile in an attempt to save her life (in *Great Expectations* it is their daughter's life he saves by exiling himself). And in both novels, he prizes above all else the life he can never have, that of an "English Gentleman," and resolves to turn a young orphan who showed him kindness, Pip, renamed Henry Phipps in *Jack Maggs*, into that gentleman. Jack Maggs and Abel Magwitch are both unkempt, violent, ill-mannered, menacing, yet generous and kind to those who show them kindness. What, then, is Carey's goal in rewriting this tale from the convict's point of view? And why does he alter the peripheral details so much, such as names and places, when he leaves the more substantial elements as they are in the previous novel?

Carey has said that he was led toward *Great Expectations* by Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. He says that Said envisions Magwitch as "an Englishman who can be an Englishman as long as he does not return to

England, which had been home" ("Powell's" 2). When Said discusses Magwitch in that text, he also notes that "what Dickens envisioned for Pip, being Magwitch's 'London Gentleman,' is roughly the equivalent to what was envisioned by English benevolence for Australia" (xvi). Carey says he was then moved to read *Great Expectations*, which he had never before done. It is significant that Carey says he felt "shame" that he had never read Dickens before and that when he did, he "inhabit[ed] it from the English point of view" and saw Magwitch as "what he is to Pip and to Dickens—this sort of dark other" (Powell's 2).

A brief discussion of the repercussions of convict history on modern Australia may serve to sketch the lasting significance of Australia's beginnings and why Carey might choose to "rehabilitate" Magwitch. In his cultural history of Australia, *The Road to Botany Bay*, Paul Carter explains first that the only details we have of the convict's lives are written by the First Fleet chroniclers, Arthur Phillip and his men.[47] In fact, a good part of white Australia's early written history comes from the journals of the First Fleet chroniclers. As Carter notes, "these writers treat the convicts as irrational beings little superior in either intellect or morals to the Aborigines. . . [the convict] exists as a reflection of a body of rules, as a personification of

[47] The First Fleet was the first large group of ships full of Irish and English convicts and military families sent over in 1788. It was captained by Arthur Phillip, who founded the first settlement (the future Sydney) at Port Jackson and became the first Governor General of Australia (Carter xiv).

transgression, a figure of speech necessary to the ruling class's self-justification and the perpetuation of its power" (295). Carter also notes, however, that all the First Fleet chroniclers were "amused" by what one of them referred to as "fertility of invention"; the convicts, it seems, were imaginative storytellers prone to exaggeration and fantasy. Carter elaborates further on the chroniclers' view of the convicts, saying they were thought to be "incapable of sustained reasoning; given to sudden excitement [and] inexplicable changes in mood" (299).

These descriptions provide convenient justification for England's decision to transport her convicts so far away and to forbid their return. As Robert Hughes explains in his revealing study of Australia's convict past, the goal of transportation was to "uproot an enemy class from the social fabric of England" (168). The transported convicts were not guilty of violent crimes—for those felons were hanged. The average convict was a poor, landless thief from the city, one who stole in order to make a living.[48] Hughes notes that the term "class," as used in England in the 1830s, was used by the middle class to "recognize the variety of interests among working people" (165). There were, "working classes," and one of these was the "criminal class." This class was thought of as a distinct social group that "produced" crime. It was believed that this class had its own

[48] Hughes reports that 8 out of 10 of the convicts were thieves and that more than half of them were without property (159).

> argot, its hierarchies, its accumulated technical wisdom. It preserved and amplified the craft of crime, passing it on from master to apprentice. [This] promoted a vision of "generals" of crime—criminal masterminds—leading "armies" of thugs. This proved a durable fantasy. It lasted right through the nineteenth century and culminated in the image of a pre-Mafia super-criminal—Arthur Conan Doyle's Moriarty. (Hughes 165)

It is this "class" of people that was steadily transported to Australia from 1787 to 1868.[49]

The legacy of these convicts resonates in the construction of national identity in Australia. Even the story of the Allied defeat at Gallipoli, the World War I battle that has taken on legendary proportions with the Australian public, carries within it the memory of the convicts and their personalities. The ANZAC[50] soldiers of popular consciousness, Adrian Cesar explains, are either "typical bushmen," strong, clever loners from the outback, who once were freed or escaped convicts, or "from the city, a speaker of working-class argot whose 'initiative' expresses itself in petty thievery, who mistakes an Indian

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[49] During this 81 year span, approximately 150,000 men and women were transported from England and Ireland to Australia—specifically to the penal colonies in New South Wales, Van Dieman's Land, and Western Australia. The peak period for transportation was 1831-1840, which saw 51,200 carried across.

[50] Caesar points out that in order to make ANZAC a synonym for Australian manhood, the "New Zealand" in the acronym must be silently deleted.

donkey for a Turk, and who jibs at authority" (150). Cesar argues that the creation of the ANZAC myth stems from the desire to unite Australia behind one national "type" that remained true to the popular Australian view of their convict ancestors. Hughes reports this view as one of "innocent victims of unjust laws, torn from their families and flung into exile on the world's periphery" but strong and resourceful enough to survive and flourish there (158-9). Even the most popular image of a "typical" Australian in the late twentieth century, Paul Hogan's Crocodile Dundee, carries with it vestiges of the convict past, with his disdain for authority, his prowess with a knife, and his ability to escape any situation.

The lasting impact of the country's convict past moved Carey when he read the character of Magwitch in *Great Expectations*. His reading, however, was not in directly in opposition to Dickens's characterization. He believes Magwitch's story to be a "very Australian one." He describes him as

> this guy; he's cast out from his mother country; he makes money there; he's a free man; he has a conditional pardon so he can live there forever in comfort—but what does he want to do? He wants to go home to England and live with this replica, this English gentleman that he has somehow manufactured—a new member of the class that abused him in the first place. ("Powell's" 3).

Carey likes this story. He feels that it reflects the "tall poppy syndrome" from which he believes Australia suffers. He says, "[I]f you have a field of poppies and one poppy gets taller than the rest, the head gets chopped off. That's how we celebrate success in Australia" (4). However, he does feel that Dickens fails to explain *why* Magwitch does what he does, and also fails to draw those actions in a light that might be sympathetic. In *Great Expectations*, Pip acts quite badly, especially after he begins to receive money from his unknown benefactor. He spends his money poorly, he is embarrassed of his origins, and worst of all, he treats Joe badly. But because we know of Pip's difficult childhood, his unrequited love for Estella, and his horrible treatment at the hands of Miss Havisham, we continue to see him as the hero of the novel and to feel sympathy and tenderness for him even when he has done wrong. In *Jack Maggs*, Carey gives this treatment to the convict, to the Australian, so that the reader may see him as a whole human being. Carey also creates Tobias Oates, the writer of a novel within the novel, *The Death of Maggs*, in order to show how Dickens failed to tell the "whole story" of Magwitch and, by extension, the whole story of "that race" (Australians) of which Maggs denies being a part (*Jack Maggs* 340).

Perhaps the most important addition to Maggs's life made by Carey is the story of his childhood, told intermittently throughout the novel in a letter written to Henry Phipps. We learn that Maggs was a discarded citizen of

England from the beginning of his life. He was found "lying in the mud flats 'neath London Bridge" when only three days old, granted his own benefactor, Silas Smith, and taken to be raised by the aptly named Ma Britten (83). Silas asks Ma to take care of the child, telling her that he will pay all the expenses. He is, of course, raised exactly in the reverse of the method he will later ask to be employed in raising Henry. Silas brings him up to be a thief, teaching him this "craft" at a very young age. Jack's childhood recalls Hughes's observation that the English of the mid-nineteenth century believed in a "criminal class" brought up to steal and working for criminal "generals."

Carey's addition here is interesting given Dickens's own description of such children in *Oliver Twist*. Would readers have supported the Artful Dodger's transport to Australia as easily as Magwitch's? By giving Maggs a childhood that forced him to steal to survive, Carey forces sympathy from the reader for his eventual punishment and exile. Carey is not veering too far from Dickens here—only filling out the convict's character in a way that cannot be overlooked. In *Great Expectations*, Magwitch tells Pip that he was "brought up" to be "a warmint" (345). Magwitch's childhood is described so quickly, however, that the reader has little time to feel sympathy for him. He says, "I first become aware of myself, down in Essex, a thieving turnips for my living. Summun had run away from me—a man—a tinker—and he'd took the fire with him, and left me wery cold" (360). In Dickens's version, for the reader at

least, Magwitch was *always* a thief; even his own first memory of himself is of stealing. For Maggs, however, the night he began to steal for a living remains vivid in his mind, and we also see his anger and hurt when he realizes that this will be the purpose he serves in life.

Maggs vividly describes being thrown down the chimney of the first house he and Silas burgle together:

> First it was tight as a pipe, and the walls were caked with soot so many inches deep that I was held by soot, swaddled by soot, and had I not got given a great push on the crown of my head, I would not have fit at all. But push I got, and there I was jammed in like a cork in a grog bottle, some foot below the top, coughing and wailing and choking myself with fear. . . Then a great sheet of soot gave way . . . and I shrieked out in fright as I fell. The chimney was widening. In my alarm, I scratched at the walls, thus bringing down more filth into my panicked lungs. I coughed. I choked. . . I began to cry. (*JM* 108-09)

Carey's purpose with scenes like this one is to call attention to the irony of the fact that Dickens, the famous activist against child labor and poverty in London, should allow Magwitch's childhood to be swept over so quickly in his novel. In *Maggs*, the Dickens character, Toby, is not interested in this part of Jack's life. He does not probe to discover his childhood or any element of *why* he became a criminal, but only the violent things he might have done in order

to be transported. In other words, Toby wants only to get inside "the criminal mind." Carey has stated that he tried to imagine Toby as a novelist who "knows the truth and doesn't tell it" (Powell's 3). By linking Toby so closely with Dickens, Carey suggests this about him as well.[51]

Whereas Dickens discusses almost nothing about Magwitch's time in Australia, Carey gives little more about Maggs's time in the penal colony. However, what is given is so significant that it calls attention to the links between memory, writing, and truth that Carey seems to want to stress in writing this novel. In Dickens's novel, we learn that Magwitch has been "a sheep-farmer, stock-breeder, other trades besides" and that he has done "wonderfully well" and is famous for it (335). Maggs has had similar success in Australia and has also fathered children, whom he has left so that he may devote his life to his English "son." But whereas Dickens tells us only of Magwitch's fortune in the new country, Carey gives a fuller picture of convict life under British rule. Through the trances Tobias induces to force Jack to talk about his criminal past as well as through Maggs's nightmares, we see the memory of the floggings Jack endured in New South Wales. The uniformed

[51] Many elements of Toby's character suggest the link to Dickens. Toby's sister-in-law, Lizzie, who was pregnant with his child, dies on May 7th, 1837, the same day Dickens's sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, died. According to Johnson, Dickens had "emotionally-charged entanglements with his sisters-in-law" (241). Also, as reported at the end of *Jack* Maggs, *The Death of Maggs* was published in the same manner and at the same time as *Great Expectations*. Both were began in 1837, abandoned due to grief, began again in 1859, serialized in 1860, and then published as books.

figure who plagues his subconscious mind comes to be called the Phantom—and it is he who Tobias believes has caused all the torment in Jack's life. Indeed, when in a trance, Jack worries about "Captain Logan" and fears only that he might be witness to another flogging. He also removes his shirt during the first trance to reveal "a sea of pain etched upon [his] back, a brooding sea of scars, of ripped and tortured skin" (95).

Flogging, specifically with the cat-o'-nine tails, was an inescapable element of early Australia. Hughes says that the cat's "whistle and dull crack were as much a part of the aural background to Australian life as the kookaburra's laugh" (427). He notes that even the lightest punishment, 25 lashes (known as a "Botany Bay dozen"), was able to skin a man's back completely and leave a map of scars. The emotional effects of flogging were even greater than the physical. Hughes argues that the cat-o'-nine tails

> instilled not a respect for discipline, but a sullen conviction of one's own impotence in the face of Authority; this could be expunged by violence or erased by one's own death. Next to homosexual rape, flogging was the most humiliating invasion of the body that could befall a prisoner. Nothing in an ordinary man's experience compared to the rituals of the cat: to be stripped and tied to the triangle, like an owlskin nailed to a barn door; to hear, through battering pain, the quartermaster-sergeant slowly calling out the strokes; this was to be drowned in

powerlessness. It left the prisoner consumed with worthlessness and self-hatred. (429)

Given this background, it is understandable that Toby would assume that the memories of flogging would be the cause of the *tic doloreaux* from which Maggs suffers. Even when he finds out the truth, that the painful tick is caused by the memory of Maggs' dead son, he continues to insist that it is The Phantom and that his trances will cure Maggs of the problem. Here, the novelist knows the truth and does not tell it—just as Carey believes Dickens did. Toby purposely overlooks Maggs' true pain because he believes "the criminal mind" will make a better story. In the eyes of Toby's would-be readership, the flogging is justified: he was a criminal who deserved his punishment. It is Maggs's sad childhood and the forced abortion of his unborn son that would finally garner sympathy and understanding, so Toby is uninterested in that part of the story.

Carey imagines Dickens as a novelist doing the same thing: overlooking Magwitch's story because it would weaken Pip's. Even when Maggs writes out the whole story for Henry to read and thus understand his actions, he does so backwards, in invisible ink. Maggs has been conditioned to conceal even his own story. Of course, we are to understand that he does this to avoid capture and return to Australia, where he is, we should remember, a free man. But he chooses to return to England, to be English, despite the fact

that "Ma Britten" has never loved him and never accepted him. She only raised him to be a thief, killed his son, and exiled him for life when he was caught doing the thing he was raised to do.

If, as Benedict Anderson argues, the concept of a nation is "all in the head," fiction is the perfect vehicle for examining what a particular nation is and what that might mean for its citizens, past, present, and future. It is not coincidental that both of the contemporary writers discussed in this chapter are expatriates—Rushdie living in London and Carey making his home in New York City. Both writers profess to love their home countries and feel pride in many aspects of Indian and Australian culture, respectively. Yet they stay away from home and write novels that seem to emphasize the negative aspects of these countries as much as the positive. It is the desire to present a whole, appropriately complex view of nations and nationalism that inspires both Rushdie and Carey to turn to the canonical texts that form the foundation for the novels discussed here.

Chapter Five: Rewriting and Tradition: The Example of Ireland

In this final chapter, I examine rewriting in Ireland, England's oldest colony and a country whose presence in discussions of postcolonial literature is controversial. As I have noted elsewhere in this text, rewriting texts that have, in some way, written *you* is an especially powerful way of taking back those tools of description and using them for your own means. This is true for any writer who feels marginalized by a dominant literary tradition. As I have also noted in this text, literature was an important tool of empire, so for postcolonial authors this strategy seems especially appropriate.

In Ireland, as I will discuss later in this chapter, the education received by colonial children was no less imperialistic than in any other colony of the British empire. In addition, the attempt, by the English, to disrupt native culture in Ireland was no less aggressive than in India or Africa. Despite these facts, the inclusion of Ireland in discussions of postcolonial theory and literature is a controversial move. Irish authors, especially the two I discuss in this chapter, W.B. Yeats and James Joyce, have long been canonized, with their works being taught in English literature seminars and included in English literature anthologies. For these reasons, and because of racial and cultural similarites between the English and the Irish, it seems the postcoloniality of Irish literature is never certain. In this chapter, I argue that the writings of Yeats and Joyce are postcolonial in that they work to create a portrait of

Ireland that that will supplant the identity created for them through centuries of colonial rule.[52] Both authors employ strategies of rewriting in attempting to create this portrait, although neither of them turns to canonical English texts to do this, as do all of the other postcolonial authors discussed here.

Yeats rewrites several traditional myths and legends from pre-Christian Celtic Ireland. His goal in reviving these works was to find an image around which all of Ireland could rally--an image that would transcend sectarian differences and political feuding. Ultimately, as I argue here, this goal was unsuccessful precisely because he chose to revise the island's own myths. The images he created were beautiful, and they did portray an ancient, complex, proud culture, but in the difficult times faced by Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century, as symbols of modern Ireland they proved irrelevant--except, ironically, to the fervent nationalists whom Yeats saw as fanatical and single-minded. Trying to return to something he saw as pure and untainted by modernity, Yeats failed to provide for modern Ireland a mirror in which its people could see themselves.

The Irish were living, in the early twentieth century, in a hybrid state. After eight hundred years of colonialism they had retained much of what they felt made them "Irish," but much of that had been constructed by what it meant to be "not-English." In *Ulysses*, James Joyce provides the mirror of modern

[52] Here, I take the "post" in postcolonial to mean from the moment of colonization onward.

Ireland that Yeats could not produce. Yet this mirror is, as Stephen Dedalus says in the opening chapter, cracked. Joyce's text recognizes the complexity of Ireland's condition, eight hundred years after colonization and on the brink of full nationhood. His Dublin is far from the pristine, pure culture Yeats portrayed in his rewritings of the myths, but Joyce was striving for an accurate reflection of his city and his country. He wanted, he once said, for it to be possible to reconstruct perfectly the Dublin that stood in 1904 from the text of *Ulysses*.

In creating this portrait, Joyce uses as his foundation not a canonical English text, but a text from the foundation of Western civilization, Homer's *The Odyssey*. In doing so, he locates Ireland simultaneously with England and against it—for his use of this text allows him to place his Ireland firmly in the European tradition by using Homer's epic to narrate the events of a day in the life of an ordinary Dubliner while at the same time mocking the ceremonial reverence given to classic works of art.

I begin this chapter with an analysis of Yeats's play *Dierdre* in order to show how such rewrites worked in the hands of the Irish Literary Revival. I follow this with a discussion of the challenges those involved in the Revival faced and argue that such challenges could never have been met by the uncritical rewriting of Celtic myth seen in much of Yeats's early poetry. I end this chapter with an analysis of how *Ulysses*, despite Joyce's lack of

partnership with the Revivalists, provides the vehicle they sought to propel Ireland successfully into the modern world.

Yeats and Deirdre

In W.B. Yeats's play *Deirdre* (1907), the title character eventually triumphs over her would-be oppressor, King Conchubar, but at a terrible price. She takes her own life in order to lie in the grave of her lover, Naoise, who has been killed by Conchubar and his men.[53] Yeats's play is drawn from the legend of Deirdre, which is itself part of *The Ulster Cycle*, a collection of sagas of tribal warfare and individual prowess from seventh-century Ireland. In the original version, Deirdre's story is titled *The Fate of the Sons of Usnech* and is merely a brief diversion from the principle saga, the *Tain Bo Cuilgne* (*The Cattle Raid of Cuilgne*). Yeats, however, saw Deirdre as a richly symbolic heroine on whom to focus his ideas about Ireland and its future. Deirdre is a woman with "too much beauty for good luck" (48) who has defied the king's

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[53] With most of the Irish Gaelic names in this text, there are several different spelling variants from which to choose. Compounding this problem is the fact that Yeats often used idiosyncratic spellings and pronunciations. I have used the spellings from *Ancient Irish Tales* by Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover, except when discussing a specific character of Yeats's. In those cases, I use his spelling.

order that she marry him and has gone into a twelve-year exile with her lover, Naoise, and his brothers, Arden and Ainnle.

The four are drawn from hiding by the king's messenger, Fergus, who calls them home with the news that they have been forgiven by Conchubar and may return safely. The sincerity of this message is bolstered by the fact that Ulster is in need of young, popular men like Naoise and his brothers to lead the fight in the war against Connaught. Deirdre, unlike Naoise and Fergus, does not trust the king and believes they are being led into a trap. She believes that "when a man who has loved like that is after crossed, love drowns in its own flood, and that love drowned and floating is but hate; and that a king who hates sleeps ill at night till he has killed; and that, though the day laughs, we shall be dead at cock-crow" (56). Naoise, though he is apprehensive, believes they must act with honor and take the king's word as a promise. He tells her, "[W]hen we give a word and take a word, sorrow is put away, past wrong forgotten" (58). Like Naoise, Fergus trusts in the sincerity of the king's word and urges Deirdre not to be afraid. When Conchubar and his men do arrive, they quickly kill Naoise and his brothers and plan to take Deirdre to the castle to make her queen. She thwarts them, however, by killing herself while she pretends to be tending to Naoise's body.

Yeats's version of the tale differs from the original story in several important ways. He begins his story after Deirdre and Naoise have returned to

Ireland after their exile. The legend, on the other hand, begins with Deirdre's birth. According to the tale, before she was born it was prophesied that she would be a woman of incomparable beauty who would be the cause of much violence and suffering among the men of Ulster. King Conchubar decrees that she be taken from her parents and raised in seclusion until she is old enough to be his wife. Most versions of the story agree that when Deirdre does come of age, she deliberately seeks out a man with "hair like the raven, his cheek like the blood, and his body like the snow" (Mac Cana 96). Her companion, Lebhorcham, tells her that man is Naoise, son of Usnech. They meet, and she propositions him openly. Knowing the prophecy, Naoise refuses. According to Proinsias Mac Cana's version of the tale, Deirdre then threatens him with shame and mocks him until he agrees to take her away with him. As Mac Cana notes, "In this way she involved his personal honour—the supreme consideration to the heroic conscience—and compelled him to violate the bonds of obligation and loyalty to his king" (96).

In the original tale, Deirdre is clearly the dominant figure, commanding the lives of Naoise and his brothers through her strong will and her fatal beauty. Her strength and power to dominate the men are most evident when, as a young girl, she deliberately seeks out Naoise despite the prophecy and bullies him and his brothers into running away with her. Initially, Naoise rejects her, telling her he has heard the prophecy and will not tempt fate by

going with her. She wins him over by threatening to spread news of his cowardice and bring him widespread shame. Yeats begins his play after this scene--stripping Deirdre of much of her autonomy. We do not see her active participation in her own story as we do in the original tale. In Yeats's play, Deirdre is only being acted upon by the characters and events surrounding her; she is not, as Giovanna Tallone puts it, "moulding her own story" or setting herself up as a prototype of the Artist, or at least the "maker" or "artificer" of her own legend (105). Despite the fact that Deirdre, her lover, and his brothers die in the end, seemingly having lost, she does carefully and at times deliberately fulfill the prophesy of her birth, and Yeats obscures this fact.

In addition, in Yeats's version, Deirdre actively tries to keep the four in exile to avoid fulfilling the prophesy, using her beauty and charm to reign over the men. When Fergus appears to ask them to return to Ireland, she begins to lose some of this control. Deirdre knows that Conchubar will not keep his word and warns Naoise of this untrustworthiness every step of the way. She even resorts to using jealousy to keep Naoise from facing Conchubar, saying,

> Then I will say
> What it were best to carry to the grave.
> Look at my face where the leaf raddled it
> and at these rubies on my hair and breast.

It was for him, to stir him to desire,

I put on beauty; yes for Conchubar. (58)

In the original tale, there is no such pleading or negotiation. She seems to be resigned to her fate (and Naoise's as well) and does not apply pressure on him to change his mind. She accepts that they are destined to die and bravely faces her destiny.

Yeats also moves the violence of the legend off stage or removes it entirely. We do not see the bloody deeds of Naoise and his brothers during their exile, or their violent deaths, or Deirdre's suicide. In addition to these omissions, Yeats adds an element to the story, the recurring theme of the betrayal of Lugaidh Redstripe and his wife. Several characters in the play refer to this legend, and the fateful meeting with Conchubar takes place in the same house where they were taken. An exchange between Naoise and Fergus offers the most insight into the tale that is at best only alluded to:

Naoise: If I had not King Conchubar's word I'd think

That chess-board ominous.

Fergus: How can a board

That has been lying there these many years

Be lucky or unlucky?

Naoise: It is the board

Where Lugaidh Redstripe and that wife of his,

Who had a seamew's body half the year,

Played at the chess upon the night they died.

Fergus: I can remember now, a tale of treachery,

A broken promise and a journey's end--

But it were best forgot. (53)

Yeats's changes here, eliminating or lessening the responsibility of the main characters, especially Deirdre, shifting the violence out of the audience's view, and adding references to a legend of betrayal and broken promises, significantly alter the message of the original tale which left the listener with the image of a strong, determined woman. True, Deirdre came to be known as "Deirdre of the Sorrows"; her story was a sad tale. But she was no innocent victim. She deliberately fulfilled the prophecy surrounding her own birth and thus actively controlled the action around her. In Yeats's version, though, she is a beautiful, tragic woman bullied, betrayed, and separated from her true love by a greedy, dishonest king. As a symbol of Ireland, Deirdre represents the nation as a victim of oppression, noble and innocent and pure. With this portrayal, Yeats attempts to create just such an image of Ireland, just as he would do with his rewrites of several other Celtic tales. His appropriations of these tales do not address Ireland's role in her own fate, nor do they address the sense of cultural inferiority and lost identity that eight hundred years of colonization had created for Ireland. Yeats's rewrites insist on finding pristine

images of ancient Irish culture behind which the nation can stand. In this sense, they are failures. It is no wonder that Ireland, like the original Deirdre, might believe it was doomed to fail and actively participate in making that prophesy come true.

The Challenges of the Irish Literary Revival

Ireland was England's oldest colony, and the first to engage in an organized fight for independence from imperial domination. Originally colonized in the thirteenth century, Ireland would endure eight hundred years of harsh rule before gaining its independence. Even then, of course, the six northernmost counties of the island remained part of Great Britain, a separation that remains a source of controversy and violence today.

Despite Ireland's history, it is often excluded in discussions of post-colonial literature and theory. Many scholars have even felt compelled to formulate detailed arguments to prove that Ireland and its artists should be considered post-colonial at all. Scholarship that discusses James Joyce in a post-colonial context is a relatively recent trend, even though his work deals explicitly with the cultural, linguistic, and religious ramifications of Ireland's lengthy history as a colony.[54] The necessity of having to argue for post-

[54] Seamus Deane's chapter on "Joyce the Irishman" in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (ed. Derek Attridge, 1990) and the discussions of Joyce by Deane, Terry Eagleton, and Frederick Jameson in *Nationalism,*

colonial status for Ireland, when the circumstances clearly warrant this status, stems from several factors. Similarities in race, language, religion, and customs, as well as geographical proximity, create easy comparisons between the English and the Irish, sometimes rendering them indistinguishable from one another. This seeming lack of difference between colonizer and colonized is compounded by the fact that Ireland can be seen as both an imperial colony and a settler colony. While the Irish Catholic peasants of the country and the working classes of the city were oppressed and impoverished, denied the right to vote and own land, and effectively starved by the English during the Great Famine of the 1840s, the members of the Protestant Ascendancy were deliberately sent to Ireland to act as the landlords and overseers of the Catholics. Several of modern Ireland's most visible artists and writers were, in fact, of this class, including W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M. Synge.

Although these cultural figures were the descendants of English settlers in Ireland, by the time of the Irish Literary Revival the Irish roots of the "Anglo-Irish" ran deep. In fact, up until the later nineteenth century and the

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Colonialism, and Literature (1990) were some of the first pieces to deal with Joyce as a post-colonial author. A series of books that dug deeper into this approach soon followed, including Edna Duffy's *The Subaltern* Ulysses (1994); Vincent J. Cheng's *Joyce, Race and Empire* (1995); and Emer Nolan's *James Joyce and Nationalism* (1995). Several books appearing in the mid - 1990s that focused on Irish literature and culture discussed Joyce in this context as well, including Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995); Deane's *Strange Country* (1997); and Richard Kearney's *Postnationalist Ireland* (1997).

return to Gaelic culture, the term "Anglo-Irish" was not commonly used, for it was not deemed necessary. The Protestant landowners were just as "Irish" as anyone else (Beckett 10). By the end of the eighteenth century, a small group of Anglo-Irish had even given up allegiance to the crown, risking their privileged positions, and taken a stand for the cause of freedom from England. In fact, several of the leaders of the 1798 rebellion, included Wolfe Tone, who would later be mythologized by modern Nationalists, were Anglo-Irish. By the end of the nineteenth century, during the beginnings of the Irish Literary Revival, many more Anglo-Irish had joined the cause of liberation. Although their position was always a complicated one, the writers of this movement were wholly committed to the creation of a national literature to represent Ireland to itself and to the world (Beckett 73-75, 140-141).

These writers, led by Douglas Hyde, Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, worked to find a cultural representation of Ireland that would bolster the move for political independence. Their efforts complemented the ideas formulated by Hyde in his 1892 speech "The Necessity for De-anglicising Ireland." Hyde felt that Irish culture was too often defined by what it was not. He was afraid that in the eyes of the world, and even to the Irish themselves, Ireland had become nothing more than "not-England." Although they had made great strides in terms of political independence, the Irish leaders of the nineteenth century had neglected the importance of cultural independence. Declan Kiberd

summarizes Hyde's feelings: "In exalting the fight against England into a self-sustaining tradition, the leaders of the previous century had largely forgotten what it was that they were fighting for: a distinctive culture of folktales, dances, sports, costumes, all seamlessly bound by the Irish language" (*Inventing* 138). Hyde urged the Irish to right this wrong, claiming that the ambiguous position of imitating England and hating it at the same time could not produce "anything good in literature, art or institutions" (80). He then went on to explain how the Irish could extricate themselves from this problem, asserting, "[I]t is our Gaelic past which, though the Irish race does not recognise it just at present, is really at the bottom of the Irish heart, and prevents us becoming citizens of the Empire" (80-81). A return to pre-colonial Ireland and its tales and customs would teach the Irish who they really were and why they refused to settle quietly into the Empire. Hyde says,

> Through early Irish literature, for instance, can we best form some conception of what that race really was, which, after overthrowing and trampling on the primitive peoples of half of Europe, was itself forced in turn to yield its speech, manners, and independence to the victorious eagles of Rome. We alone of the nations of Western Europe escaped the claws of those birds of prey; we alone developed ourselves naturally upon our own lines outside of and free from all Roman influence; we alone were thus able to produce an early art and

literature, *our* antiquities can best throw light upon the pre-Romanised inhabitants of half Europe, and--we are our father's sons. (82)

The young Yeats was impressed by Hyde's rhetoric, with one important exception. He felt that the revival of traditional Irish culture and customs would return art to the people and instill a self-belief which might in time lead to social and cultural prosperity. While he agreed with Hyde ideologically, he felt that the language in which a culture was expressed was not so important as the great ideas and myths of that culture. Hyde was a harsh critic of folklorists who did not know common Gaelic words, a problem Yeats had as well (Frayne 186). This fundamental difference marks the contradiction inherent in much of the Irish Literary Revival. Yeats and other prominent Anglo-Irish artists were intent on reviving Irish literature--but they were doing it in English. They were also capable of viewing the scene from the privileged position of the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy. As George Watson argues, they had no "cultural inferiority complex," as the poorer Irish Catholics did. Thus they might pick and choose among the fragments to create an individual idealized version of Ireland (21). Kiberd explains that, for Yeats, this idealized Ireland included "a literary form so pure that it had not been indentured to any cause, whether of nation or of art, a form so fitted to a people's expressive ensemble that it would seem but an aspect of daily life" (139).

One route to this longed-for "purity" lay in revising the Celtic Myths of the past. This was an especially attractive path for Yeats for two reasons. His interest in the occult meshed nicely with the supernatural elements of the myths. Perhaps more important, going back to pre-Christian Ireland allowed him to avoid engaging too directly with what he saw as the vulgarity of Catholicism, whose practitioners he felt lacked "good taste" and "household courtesy and decency" (qtd. in Watson 87). Thus, he was quite enthusiastic about the wealth of material that lay in Ireland's ancient literary past. In a review of Samuel Ferguson's poetry, Yeats said

> In these poems and the legends they contain lies the refutation of the calumnies of England and those amongst us who are false to their country. We are often told that we are men of infirm will and lavish lips, planning one thing and doing another, seeking this to-day and that tomorrow. But a widely different story do these legends tell. The mind of the Celt loves to linger on images of persistance [*sic*]; implacable hate, implacable love, on Conor and Deirdre . . .Of all the many things the past bequeaths to the future, the greatest are great legends; they are the mothers of nations. I hold it the duty of every Irish reader to study those of his own country until they are familiar as his own hands, for in them is the Celtic heart (*Uncollected* 104).

He felt so strongly about the power of returning to the myths that he wrote in the preface to Lady Gregory's rewrite of the translation of the Ulster Cycle, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, "I think this book is the best that has come out of Ireland in my time" (11). Although he was not at first supportive of his friend's project, thinking her unqualified, when she showed him the first section she had translated, his attitude changed. It was the "beauty" of the language that effected this shift, specifically the dialect she had chosen to use, Kiltartan, the speech used by the peasants who lived near her home at Coole (Murphy 7-8). Her aim in doing this, as she said in her dedication, was to give these myths to the people of Kiltartan because "there is very little of the history of Cuchulain and his friends left in the memory of the people, but only that they were brave men and good fighters, and that Deirdre was beautiful" (5). She wanted to fill this void, not just with the scholarly translations that she felt were hard to obtain and to understand, but also with "the best of the stories, or whatever parts of each would fit best to one another." In this way, she felt, she would be giving a "fair account of Cuchulain's life and death" (5). She says, "I have told the whole story in plain and simple words," in order that it might be understood by the common people of Kiltartan and other rural areas of Ireland (5).

That the common people of Ireland should know and understand their own history was important to Lady Gregory, Yeats, Synge, Hyde, and other

artists and politicians who supported the revival of Irish history and language. As the Irish struggle gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, the necessity for an identifiable national culture or identity became of paramount importance. Until that time, for the most part, the Irish had always been defined by the English--to the English citizens, to the world, and to the Irish themselves.

From the beginning of England's colonization of the island, the stereotype of the Irishman had been one that emphasized emotion over reason. George Watson reports that the early Anglo-Saxon view of the Irish was as "Paddy the Ape, violent, drunken, poor, superstitious" (17). By the Victorian era, this view had changed little, with the Irish now thought of as "childish, unstable, emotional, all blather and no solidity." British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli described the Irish in a letter to *The Times* in 1836:

> The Irish hate our free and fertile isle. They hate our order, our civilization, our enterprising industry, our sustained courage, our decorous liberty, and our pure religion. This wild, reckless, indolent, and uncertain race has no sympathy with the English character. Their fair ideal of human felicity is an alteration of clannish broils and coarse idolatry. Their history describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood. (qtd. in Watson 16)

Watson also quotes fom a letter the novelist Charles Kingsley wrote to his wife while he was in Ireland in 1860. Kingsley writes,

> I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better and more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours. (qtd. in Watson 17)

Kingsley's last sentiment, that the Irish were so like the English in appearance, led to contradictory depictions of the native Irish--both from within the country and without. In particular, the impulse to depict themselves as vastly different from their English oppressors, when, in terms of language, customs, and education, they were becoming more like them every day, troubled the Irish in their search for a national identity.

For instance, education in imperial Ireland excluded any instruction or reading that focused on Irish traditions, history, or landscape. In the standard textbooks used by the English-run national school system, any direct references to Ireland emphasized its place in the imperial scheme of things and minimized any differences that existed between Ireland and England.[55] An

[55] These textbooks were part of a program introduced by the National Board of

excerpt from the *Second Reading Book* reads, "On the East of Ireland is England, where the Queen lives; many people who live in Ireland were born in England, and we speak the same language and are called one nation" (qtd. in Coolahan 85). Even lessons that might seem irrelevant to political causes, such as those having to do with occupations or botany, would concentrate on English experiences and ignore Irish ones with which the children might have been more familiar. Indeed, the children were not encouraged to think of Ireland at all, even in reference to themselves. They were taught to chant, "I thank the goodness and the grace/Which on my youth has smiled, /To make me in these Christian days/A happy English child" (85). From a practical standpoint, then, the Irish were learning to be English--whether they wanted to or not. Even as the struggle for independence from England gained strength during the nineteenth century, the cultural inferiority complex brought on by the lack of a language or an institutional apparatus to carry on native tradition threatened to cripple the movement by depriving it of the necessary public support. In other words, a successful freedom movement could not unite behind the spirit of being "not English" but would need the motivation that would come along with being proudly Irish.

Education in 1834 to standardize the curriculum in Irish schools in order to provide a defense against the Gaelic league's campaign to revive the Irish language in the schools. The five books were published and distributed at subsidized rates and even became the readers of choice in other English-speaking countries. (Coolahan 84-85)

That motivation came when, in 1879, Michael Davitt founded the Land League. This organization aimed to politicize the peasants of Ireland by giving them an ideology. Specifically, it argued that the land they lived and worked on was theirs by ancient rights. This version of the past, which insisted upon a Celtic Ireland where the native peasants owned their own land and were then displaced by English settlers, was largely mythological. Celtic Ireland had been run, of course, by the prominent families of the time, who, like the Anglo-Irish landlords of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, paid little attention to the rights and needs of their tenant farmers. But the image created by the Land League, of the dignified, independent, Irish peasant with clear roots in the Celtic past, helped Nationalists to galvanize the common people of Ireland behind their goal of Home Rule. At the same time, this celebration of the peasant would set up a lasting contradiction for Nationalist politicians and writers. They were now in a position to idealize the very stereotype instinct would tell them to fight against. George Watson explains this contradiction:

> Thus, the Irish peasant, who summoned up in his poverty, superstition, ignorance, and vulgarity everything that many English minds considered to be wrong with Ireland, could now, thanks to the Land League's propaganda, be claimed by many Irishmen in a spirit of defiant contradiction, to embody everything that was good about Ireland, and to constitute in his way of life its essence. (22)

For the writers of the Irish Literary Revival, especially Yeats and Lady Gregory, this image of Celtic Ireland--traditional, picturesque, organic--offered fertile ground for contrasting Ireland with modern, commercial, industrial (and thus soulless) England. The idealization of rural Ireland and the peasants who lived there led naturally to the idealization of the inhabitant of ancient Celtic Ireland as well. The heroes and heroines of Celtic tales such as the *Tain Bo Cuilgne* and the *Fianna Fail* provided just the inspirational vehicle for which these artists were looking.[56]

Yeats embraces the myths

Yeats's first major poem, *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), is a three-part narrative poem that retells the story of Oisín, or Ossian, son of Fionn Mac Cumhaill from the *Fianna Fail* cycle of tales. Oisín was the poet of the Fenians, and his legend, told in the twelfth-century frame story, *Agallamh na Seanórach* (*The Colloquy of Old Men*), holds that he and his friend Caoilte survived into the Christian period, met St. Patrick, and accompanied him over

[56] The major Celtic myths and legends are generally divided into three categories: miscellaneous tales assigned to the reigns of various kings; the *Ulster Cycle*, stories of the Ulaidh or Ulstermen, their king, Conchobhar Mac Nessa and their hero, Cú Chulainn; and the *Fianna Fail*, which centers on Fionn Mac Cumhaill (anglicized as Finn McCool) and his followers, known as the Fianna or the Fenians. The *Ulster Cycle*, with its central tale, the *Tain Bo Cuilgne* (*The Cattle Raid of Cuilgne*), was considered the more prestigious of the two story cycles, while the *Fianna*, which centered on tales mostly involving hunting and nature, was more popular with the people.

a large part of Ireland. As they traveled, so the legend goes, they recounted to him their many adventures of old as they were called to mind by the natural landmarks of the countryside. Oísin's life with the immortal Niamh in the mythical Tír na n-Óg (Land of Youth), because it is what allows him to outlive all the other Fenians and converse with St. Patrick, plays an important part in both the legend and in Yeats's poem. As Mac Cana warrants, this story sets the nostalgic tone that dominates the *Fianna Fail* (104).

Yeats's poem strays little from the content of the legend. Oisin meets Niamh and travels with her first to a land full of joy and endless youth, then to a land where he kills a demon, and finally back to his own time, where he discovers all the Fenians long dead. As he did with many of his poems and plays involving myth, Yeats weaves his version of the story with his own cultural agenda as well as with more personal themes but avoids any overt suggestions of nationalism. In employing the ancient Irish tales in his early poetry, his goal was first to familiarize his readers with the old tales, as well as with pre-Christian folk and fairy tales, in the hopes that this literature would establish the "Unity of Culture" he felt was lacking in Ireland. Yeats saw how invocations of the recent past in the nationalist newspaper *The Nation* served not to unite but to arouse bitterness and animosity between poor Catholics and wealthy Protestant landowners. He felt that the old tales, because they were untainted by modernity, were free of the divisiveness of Irish politics and

history, and yet, they contained elements that would stir feelings of pride and unity. Thus, Yeats's early poems that use myth, such as "The Madness of King Goll," "Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea," "Fergus and the Druid," "Who Goes with Fergus?," and *The Wanderings of Oisin*, do not hint at nationalist calls-to-arms or allude to Ireland's modern struggle to be free, although they do present an Ireland full of romantic heroes and warriors whose dignity and courage are invincible. In many ways, the stories and the characters are merely vehicles for Yeats's ideas of how to live life. George Watson even suggests that "the legendary trappings of the heroic world are relatively unimportant in themselves, merely masks for more personal themes, such as the antithesis between the values of action and those of 'dreaming wisdom' . . .which is one of Yeats's life-long themes " (94). *The Wanderings of Oisin* contains many of these personal themes as well as elements that further Yeats's notions of national culture and identity.

The character of Oisin has, in Yeats's own words, a "mingled nobility and savagery" (*Letters* I, 141). He embodies the commonly held notion of an ancient Celtic warrior possessing eloquence, lyric genius, a volatile temperament, reckless bravery, ebullience, contentiousness, loyalty.[57] Although he is a warrior, as are the rest of the Fenians, he is also a poet, and it

[57] Proinsais Mac Cana claims that similar descriptions of Celtic warriors can be found in accounts by classical authors as far back as the first century.

is this role that causes Niamh to desire him. When he meets her early in the poem, she says,

> I loved no man, though kings besought,
> Until the Danaan poets brought
> Rhyme that rhymed upon Oisin's name,
> And now I am dizzy with the thought
> Of all that wisdom and the fame
> Of battles broken by his hands,
> Of stories builded by his words. (62-68)

When he leaves with Niamh he rejects savagery and bloodshed in favor of a peaceful existence with his wife in a land where "God is joy and joy is God, / And things that have grown sad are wicked" (300-301). However, when Oisin finds the weapon of a long-dead warrior on the beach, it reminds him of his past as a warrior. He says to St. Patrick, "I turned it in my hands; the stains / Of war were on it, and I wept, / Remembering how the Fenians stept / Along the blood-bedabbled plains / Equal to good or grievous chance" (68-72). Oisin longs to be able to fulfill both his callings, as the gentle poet-husband to Niamh and as the brutal warrior son of Fionn.

Hoping to see the Fenians again, although one hundred years have passed since he left, Oisin attempts to take Niamh back to his homeland. They stop first on the Isle of Many Fears, where Oisin stalks and kills a demon in a

long battle. Oisin is forced to kill the demon many times as it continually changes shape as he attacks. This battle revives in him his need for action and aggression; he also feels such fights are rightfully part of his nature as a Fenian. Niamh urges him to flee the demon, but these pleas, he says, "[M]oved not / My angry king-remembering soul one jot. / There was no mightier soul of Heber's line" (93-95). Yeats has Oisin link his need for battle with his Irishness here by invoking Heber. Heber, according to legend, was one of the Milesians, early invaders of Ireland, and the ancestor to all human inhabitants of Ireland. Oisin has shown himself by this point to be a classic Celtic hero--an eloquent, ebullient man of words whose violent temper, bravery, and impetuousness cannot keep him out of harm's way, even after a century of peace.

In the third and final part of the poem, Oisin describes to Patrick the final island that he and Niamh visited. On this last island he dreamed of the departed Celtic warriors, beginning with the heroes of the Ulster Cycle, Conchubar Mac Nessa, Fergus, and their men. Yeats believed that the Fenians of Oisin's time had consciously modeled themselves on the Ulstermen, claiming that they "wanted to revive the kind of life lived in old days when the Chiefs of the Red Branch gathered round Cuchullin" (*Uncollected* 164).[58] Invoking first the names of these Red Branch kings, followed by the names of

[58] Yeats believed that the Ulster or Red Branch cycle "preceded the Finian cycle by about two hundred years" (qtd. in Albright 410).

the Fenians themselves, who are at this point in the poem part of history as well, places these proud Celtic warriors in a direct line that inevitably, for the reader, leads to modern Ireland and the struggle for independence. At the end of his time on this island, Oisin decides he must leave the Immortals and go back to the land of the Fenians. When he returns, now in Christian Ireland, he finds that they have passed on. He asks Patrick, "What place have Caoilte and Conan, and Bran, Sceolan, Lomair?" (195). Oisin sees no place in Christian Ireland for these, his old Fenian companions. Coming as it does in the midst of a dialogue with St. Patrick, the most popular emblem of Catholic Ireland, this question is Yeats's call to the reader as well, a call to return to a united Irish heritage.

The call to unify is reinforced by the fact that St. Patrick answers Oisin by claiming the Fenians are in hell. He says,

> Where the flesh of the footsole clingeth on the
> burning stones is their place;
> Where the demons whip them with wires on the burning
> stones of wide Hell,
> Watching the blessed ones move far off, and the smile on
> God's face,
> Between them a gateway of brass, and the howl of angels
> who fell. (197-200)

Throughout the poem, Patrick interjects confrontational denunciations of Oisin's life, calling his dreams "heathen" and his companions "long accurst and dead." He says that God is angered by Oisin's stories and tells him to seek forgiveness, saying, "For God has heard, and speaks His angry mind; / Go cast your body on the stones and pray, / For He has wrought midnight and dawn and day" (206-08). Now, at the end of the poem, Oisin challenges him, saying,

> Put the staff in my hands; for I go to the Fenians, O
> cleric, to chaunt
> The war-songs that roused them of old; they will rise,
> making clouds with their breath,
> Innumerable, singing, exultant; the clay underneath them
> shall pant,
> And demons be broken in pieces, and trampled beneath
> them in death. (201-204)
>
> .....
>
> We will tear out the flaming stones, and batter the gateway
> of brass
> And enter, and none sayeth 'No' when there enters the
> strongly armed guest;
> Make clean as a broom cleans, and march on as oxen move

over young grass;

Then feast, making converse of wars, and of old wounds,

and turn to our rest. (209-212)

Oisin's challenge to Patrick, coming as it does at the end of the poem, serves two purposes for Yeats. First, it acts as a call to Ireland to reject sectarian biases and unite behind their pre-Christian Irish heritage. St. Patrick, symbol of Catholic Ireland, is unable to see beyond the bounds of his own religion. He sees the Fenians only as pagans existing outside of God's grace. Sympathy in the poem clearly lies with Oisin, faithful husband, demon slayer, brave, loyal warrior--in short, an image behind which all Irish, Catholic and Protestant, can unite.

This confrontation between the Christian saint and the pagan hero also played an important personal role for Yeats that would persist in his imagination and his work until the end of his life. He saw their confrontation as the conflict between the objective, which Yeats called the *primary*, and the subjective, or the *antithetical*. In *The Wanderings of Oisin*, the title character (as well as paganism) represents the antithetical, and thus values creativity, heroic conduct, and nobility. St. Patrick and Christianity are the primary, and are thus servile, obedient, and chaste (Albright xl, 398).[59] While Yeats's sympathies definitely lay with the antithetical, he believed that all personalities

[59] Yeats explains his complicated theories of personality that led him to these descriptions in *A Vision* (1925, revised 1937).

were mixed--no one could be a completely subjective or completely objective personality. It was this hybrid state that he would continue to celebrate in his poetry.

It is ironic that Yeats should be so attracted to the oscillation of personalities between one state and another, yet fail to celebrate the hybrid state of Ireland as well. As I have noted above, Yeats's primary reason for using ancient Celtic tales such as Oisin's story was to reach into Ireland's past and find images so stirring, so memorable, so purely Irish, that they would produce the Unity of Culture for which he longed. He continued to use such tales as the basis for many of his poems and for twelve of his twenty-six plays. As Watson puts it, Yeats and Lady Gregory "saw the prime aim of their work at the outset as the necessity to bring back dignity to the image of Ireland, both at home and abroad" (90). For Yeats, that dignity had been lost through a combination of sectarian squabbling and the rise of the Irish middle class.

We can see his disdain for the overwhelmingly Catholic middle class in several of his poems that do not deal directly with myth and legend. In fact, it is through an examination of these poems that we can see how Yeats's optimistic desire to unite Ireland through the Celtic revival was doomed to fail precisely because he tended to separate so completely Irish myth from Irish reality. With the exception of his play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, his works that spring from or rewrite myths and legends do little to suggest how such images

might work for actual readers in terms of thinking about their country and their identity, especially in light of nationalism.

For instance, in "September 1913," Yeats admonishes the common people for the servile, utilitarian morality that has severed them from ancestral heroes such as John O'Leary and the legendary Fenians before him.[60] He says,

> What need you, being come to sense,
> But fumble in a greasy till
> And add the halfpence to the pence
> And prayer to shivering prayer, until
> You have dried the marrow from the bone;
> For men were born to pray and save:
> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (1-8)

This poem was inspired by a controversy involving the Dublin Municipal Gallery. The philanthropist Sir Hugh Lane, Lady Gregory's nephew, proposed to donate a substantial collection of French Impressionist paintings to the Gallery on the condition that the Dublin Corporation build an art gallery over the River Liffey. The ultimate rejection of his proposal was based in part on the assumption by the Dublin authorities that the common people did not care

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[60] O'Leary (1830-1907) was a modern Fenian leader, imprisoned for years, whom Yeats knew personally and admired a great deal.

enough about fine art to contribute to the building of such a gallery (Albright 526, 528).[61]

"September 1913" goes on to mention the wild geese, Edward Fitzgerald, Robert Emmet, and Wolfe Tone, lamenting that they died "for this."[62] For Yeats, "this," the state to which middle-class Ireland had come, was appallingly banal, passionless, and meaningless. Yeats contrasts his view of modern Irish life with the image of "Romantic" Ireland, a time that, to him, had produced many great heroes that the common people lacked the will to follow. In the final stanza he claims that if the Irish of 1913 were to see those famed romantic patriots they would cry, "'Some woman's yellow hair / Has maddened every mother's son'" (27-28). In other words, even faced with the best Ireland had to offer, the common people would attribute their passion and their sacrifices to something so trite.

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[61] Yeats addresses this controversy explicitly in "To a Wealthy Man who promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were proved the People wanted Pictures." He felt that it was foolish to ask the common people about matters of culture and art and that the Dublin authorities should have taken it upon themselves to agree to Lane's proposal (Albright 526).

[62] The wild geese were Irishmen who served in continental armies after the passage of the 1691 Penal Laws that harshly restricted the freedom of Irish Catholics. Tone led a 1798 attempt to overthrow the British with the help of the French. Fitzgerald was an important participant in this failed attempt. Emmet led an 1803 revolt against England and was executed for this (Albright 528).

In his poems and plays that draw from myths and legends Yeats tends to present Irish images that are, while not exactly role models for modern Ireland, symbols of strength, bravery, and purpose. He sets these texts firmly in their ancient setting, however, hindering his own stated purpose in originally rewriting the texts. In his poems that draw on nationalist themes, he tends to offer thinly disguised (and sometimes overt) condemnation of the common people for their inability to strive toward or even to understand his dreams for the future of Ireland. Even in a poems like "Easter 1916" (1916) and "The Irish Airman Foresees His Death" (1918), which both celebrate heroism in modern Irishmen, the heroic deed is presented as though severed from history and politics. In "Easter 1916," a poem inspired by the execution of fifteen of the leaders of the failed Easter Uprising on 24 April 1916, he speaks of the participants as though their actions were spontaneous and self-contained. The poem's tone conveys a note of surprise, as though heroism unexpectedly interrupted the mundane lives of the rebels:

> I have met them at close of day
> Coming with vivid faces
> From counter or desk . . .
> I have passed with a nod of the head
> Or polite meaningless words . . .
> Being certain that they and I

But lived where motley is worn (1-14)

Yeats presents the shift from the pre-rebellion to post-rebellion as a sudden transformation: "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born" (15-16). In doing so, he steers clear of the elements he thought provided fuel to the rebels and their cause--years of narrow fanaticism and servile dedication to a political cause. He wants to portray the rebels as being moved suddenly and spontaneously, not after a lifetime of anger and frustration as was actually the case.

Watson argues that "Yeats's strategy is to drive a wedge between the realities of politics--for him always a dirty word--and the heroic deed by presenting it as an act leading out of nothing and to nothing" (113). He achieves this in the poem by suggesting that the *act*, the rebellion itself, was the result of "Hearts with one purpose alone," a state that is contrasted unfavorably in the third stanza with the natural images (birds, clouds, horses) that change spontaneously and continuously. Using the phrase allows Yeats to criticize the cause, which he saw as dangerously narrow-minded. On the other hand, the *actors*, the rebels, are shown as having their ordinary lives suddenly and uncharacteristically interrupted by this heroic gesture. Several of the rebels are described individually (although they are not named), and in each case he or she is depicted as having a unique personality and character before

the revolution and having tragically lost that individuality once the act has been committed.

For instance, Patrick Pearse is described as "This man who had kept a school / And rode our wingèd horse" (23-24), and his friend, Thomas MacDonagh, as one who "might have won fame in the end, / So sensitive his nature seemed, / So daring and sweet his thought" (28-30). Later in that stanza, John MacBride is described as having "resigned his part / In the casual comedy; / He too, has been changed in his turn" (36-38).[63] MacBride and the others have *been* changed by the act, almost as though the power of choice and deliberation has been taken from them and they acted purely on instinct and impulse. This was the only way for Yeats to see their actions as heroic. For him, heroes rose above the banality of history and its trappings--class, religion, politics, oppression--just as he saw the ancient Irish heroes having done. Although the poem can be, and has been, read as a beautiful tribute to the martyred rebels, it also has the effect of stripping them of their free will.[64] Declan Kiberd compares them to the child stolen away by faeries from his mother in Yeats's poem of twenty years earlier, "The Stolen Child." Kiberd claims that, for Yeats, "the dead heroes were all stolen children" and that, as

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[63] John MacBride had married Yeats's beloved Maud Gonne in 1903. The marriage was unhappy and they separated in 1905.

[64] Hugh Kenner calls "Easter 1916" "the foundational poem of the emerging Irish nation-state." He also argues that the poem expresses Yeats's shock and sorrow at "what Ireland has lost, some of its most gifted thinkers" (134).

children, "they were not full moral agents" (114). Kiberd's argument is a good one. By portraying the act of rebellion as a spontaneous, self-contained gesture driven by good men and women who were mesmerized by political fanaticism, Yeats memorializes and trivializes the rebels at the same time.

In his later poems, Yeats would acknowledge some of the mistakes he made with reviving the ancient heroes in his works. At the end of his play, *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), the singer asks,

> Are those things that men adore and loath
> Their sole reality?
> What stood in the Post Office
> With Pearse and Connolly? . . .
> Who thought Cuchulain till it seemed
> He stood where they had stood?

Pearse and some of his followers had a cult-like devotion to Cuchulain, and a statue of the dying ancient hero now stands in the Dublin Post Office Pearse and his followers briefly occupied during the Uprising. Yeats would ask, in "The Statues" (1939), "When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side, / What stalked through the Post Office?" (25-26). Also, in reference to his overtly nationalistic play *Kathleen Ni Houlihan*, he would later wonder in a poem, "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" ("Man and the Echo," 11-12). This is not to say that the proper answer to that last

question should necessarily be in the affirmative. But Yeats's use of the myths was more personal than political or cultural and at that time in Ireland's history such an uncritical use of Ireland's past was dangerous. Yeats himself may have recognized this sort of danger. One of his last poems, *The Circus Animals' Desertion* (1939), is a rumination on his earlier poem and plays, particularly those dealing with myth.[65] The poet first expresses his search for a theme, assuming that age has "broken" him and that his usually reliable muses--the myths, Maud Gonne, nationalism--can no longer be relied upon. He recalls his youth and middle age, when his "circus animals were all on show" (I, 5). However, he now sees them as "stilted," and the second section of the poem goes on specifically to deconstruct his old reliable subject matter.

Oisin is now " led by the nose" like a circus animal, and his adventures, once important to Yeats as the pure expression of human desire, are now described as "vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose" (II, 4). Yeats seems to be acknowledging here that his use of the ancient myths was actually more personal and less concerned with national culture than he would have had his audience believe. He says of Oisin, "[W]hat cared I that set him on to ride, / I starved for the bosom of his fairy bride" (II, 7-8). Yeats is perhaps speculating here that his desire to write about Oisin was fueled, as Daniel Albright suggests, by "a gaudy sublimation of his wayward sexual desire" (841). In the

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[65] "News for the Delphic Oracle" (1939) has a similar theme.

next stanza, he takes on Maud Gonne as a theme in his poetry and drama and insinuates that it is this very personal subject that drove him toward writing about the ancient queens and their rivals. Also included in this stanza is the implication that his aversion to what he saw as the fanaticisms of the nationalist movement was fueled by his obsession with Maud as well. He says,

> She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away
> But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
> I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
> So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
> And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
> This dream itself had all my thought and love. (II, 9-16)

As Albright points out, the word "masterful" is key in this stanza. He sees its use as meaning that "aesthetic contrivance smoothes and prettifies all that is rich, jagged, unsatisfying in human life" (842). Albright refers here to Yeats's tendency to smooth over the rough spots in Maud Gonne's personality, repeatedly turning her into mythological or legendary figures whose heroism was unquestionable, such as the Countess Cathleen, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, and Queen Maeve of Connaught.[66]

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[66] Yeats's play, *The Countess Cathleen*, is based on the legend of an Irish Protestant noblewoman who sold her soul to Satan in order to feed her peasants. Maud Gonne also made an attempt to feed the poor of County Donegal during a famine (Albright 841-42). Gonne played the title role in Yeats's play when it premiered at the Abbey Theatre.

In the next stanza, the poet turns to another frequent player in his works, Cuchulain. He admits here that it is possible that he was attracted to Cuchulain for personal reasons as well as for his power as a national symbol. He says of his Cuchulain-themed works, "Heart mysteries there, and yet when all is said / It was the dream itself enchanted me / Character isolated by a deed" (II, 19-21). Yeats was drawn to the legend of Cuchulain because he embodied the perfect hero for him. He was young, passionate, creative, impulsive--most definitely a character who fits the mold of the antithetical discussed earlier. Yeats wrote that action in tragedy should be isolated, an "action that is taken out of all other actions . . .The characters that are involved in it are freed from everything that is not part of that action . . . an eddy of life purified from everything but itself" (*Explorations* qtd. in Albright 843). But here, in *The Circus Animals' Desertion*, he has come to see that to isolate the character's action by removing it from the banality of life, is to strip that character or that image of its power as a symbol. As Albright puts it, "the vehicle overwhelms the tenor" (843). The poet himself says, "Players and painted stage took all my love / And not the things that they were emblems of" (II, 23-24).

In the final section of the poem, the poet questions finally the origin of his oft-used imagery. Again, the elements of this imagery became "masterful" in his hands, but, he asks, did they all begin from "A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street"? (III, 3). It appears here as though the poet has come to

decide, near the end of his life, that all images, even those he formerly thought of as untouchable, untainted, and free from the trappings of everyday life, nevertheless originate within the "heart" of the artist and, thus, are earthly. He takes this recognition to its logical conclusion with the last lines of the poem: "Now that my ladder's gone / I must lie down where all the ladders start / In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart" (III, 6-8).

By following the treatment of nationalism in Yeats's plays and poems throughout his career, we can see a gradual but definite shift. In his early poems, especially those that deal with myth, his goal of the separation of Irish literature from the bonds of politics and history is clear. Gradually, though, his poetry begins to reflect his understanding that such freedom is impossible. Indeed, if literature is to reflect life, then such a separation is not desirable, especially at a time in Ireland's history when politics and history played such a large part in people's lives. During the middle part of his career, Yeats did begin to respond to the criticism from nationalists that his work did not overtly reflect the patriotic goals of the movement. However, even when he celebrated modern Irish heroes, he tended to isolate their actions and divorce them from reality. James Joyce, who rejected the nationalist movement in Ireland and expatriated himself in 1905, wanted to do just the opposite with his portraits of Ireland and the Irish. His work seeks not the homogeneous Ireland that Yeats's did, but rather the heterogeneity he witnessed every day in every facet of the

city of Dublin.

Joyce Transforms the Myths

In *Ulysses*, James Joyce clearly links the hegemony of the English literary tradition with English colonialism in Ireland and elsewhere, demonstrating in the process that the use of their own ancestral symbols will not help to free post-colonial authors. Instead, the manipulation and reinscription of the symbols of the colonizer will better serve that purpose. Joyce also uses echoes from and elements of Celtic legends in order to question their effectiveness as symbols of national culture as used by the writers of the Irish Literary Revival

Ulysses is the story of one day in the life of Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew whose wife Molly is having an affair. The novel follows Bloom's day from his breakfast until his very late return home. The episodes of *Ulysses* are loosely patterned after the episodes of Homer's *The Odyssey,* and Bloom, with his concerns for his beautiful, alluring wife and her suitor, his quest for a son, and his position as an outsider, represents a kind of modern-day Odysseus.[67] Stuart Gilbert's 1930 study, *James Joyce's* Ulysses, which Joyce sanctioned, widely disseminated the links between the episodes in *The Odyssey* and in

[67] Bloom's real son, Rudy, is dead; he finds a surrogate son in Stephen Dedalus, the main character in four chapters of *Ulysses* and an important figure in Bloom's day.

Ulysses. Although productive comparisons of the structures of the two works can certainly be made and there are several deliberate parallels, such as the one-eyed Citizen in the "Cyclops" episode, criticism in the seventy years since the publication of Gilbert's study has effectively demonstrated that Joyce used the original work primarily as a method of organizing his thoughts and that none of Homer's episodes made it into the final text of *Ulysses* without first undergoing radical transformations.[68] Because the two works resemble each other very little in terms of ideology, tone, or technique, the main importance of *The Odyssey* as a source text for *Ulysses* is what the use of the text demonstrates about Joyce's view of the past--literary, cultural, and historical.

Joyce was critical of the way that the writers of the Irish Literary Revival, including Yeats and Lady Gregory, used the past. In *Ulysses*, Buck Mulligan, Stephen Dedalus's friend and roommate, mocks Yeats by referring to his introduction to Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. Mulligan says, sarcastically, "The most beautiful book that has come out of our country in my time. One thinks of Homer" (216). Joyce saw the uncritical reliance on the Irish past as an emblem for the Irish present and future, such as one finds in Lady Gregory's work, as a paralyzing move for the people of Ireland. In a review of her 1903 book of stories, *Poets and Dreamers*, Joyce rebuked her

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[68] Gilbert's study is generally seen as taking the connections to Homer too seriously and with "an overly pedantic emphasis on Joyce's use of arcane secondary materials" (Booker, *Joyce* 21).

simplistic recountings of the stories she had collected from old men and women in the West of Ireland. He says she has portrayed Ireland as a land "almost fabulous in its sorrow and senility" (*Critical* 103). At the end of this review, Joyce goes so far as to imply that such nostalgia reduces Ireland to the same level of cultural ignobility and vulgarity that the Revivalists insist exists in the culture of their English oppressors. Rather than the celebration of Irish history the Revivalists claimed them to be, Joyce saw appeals to the past such as this as a flight from history, not the active participation in it that he felt was the only way for Ireland to move into the future with the rest of the world.

The way Joyce uses Homer, actively and ingeniously, reflects this view of history. Fritz Senn sees this method of appropriation as a modernist "reformation of the past." Senn argues that in contrast to the way the Celtic Revivalists used works from the past, Joyce did not take *Ulysses* back to the days of Homer; instead, he "moved the novel away from the Greek groundplan" (72-73). Joyce "sets up the relatively pure and homogenous style and language of Homer's epic as a starting point against which he can define his radically heterogeneous text as the antithesis" (22). Like the other post-colonial rewrites discussed here, this type of rewriting engages with the original text and tries to change the way we read it forever. Ironically, then, this rewriting does what the Celtic Revivalists wanted to do: it constructs a portrait of Ireland that can compete on an international stage. *Ulysses* is

culturally specific and represents heterogeneity and difference within the sameness of Dublin. As Seamus Deane says, it is a "novel steeped in the midst of everyday" and "a mirror held up to culture" (41). *Ulysses* is a text that works this way because it challenges and reinscribes the authority of the Irish past, the English past, and, through the use of Homer, the past of Western civilization. The Irish Literary Revival's reliance on the ancient texts of Ireland could not grapple with the past in this way at all--the untainted images of culture it sought were unattainable. Also, in seeking these images in order to enforce the idea of an Ireland that was not England, they reinforced the separation of the two cultures and, ironically, the hegemony of the English tradition. Kiberd explains the danger Joyce saw in the search for an Ireland that was pure:

> Joyce's perception [was] that Ireland is just another of those modern places, where there is no *there* anymore. The nationalists who denounced England were, more often than not, denouncing an England inside each one of themselves. Their search for a pristine "Ireland" was a quintessentially English search, because it involved them in the search for a corresponding "England" as well, if only so that they might repudiate it. Since "Ireland" in such a construction was largely an English invention, those who took upon themselves the burden of

having an idea of Ireland were often the most Anglicized of the natives (337).

Joyce's desire to write about Ireland did not include such visions of purity and wholeness. The Ireland he knew was a hybrid, as is any modern nation, especially one in a colonial or post-colonial situation. In the opening chapter of *Ulysses*, Stephen remarks to Mulligan about the shaving mirror he is holding, "It is a cracked symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant" (6). Although written in the late teens and early twenties, *Ulysses* is set in 1904, when the Irish Literary Revival was in full swing. Stephen's comment here refers then not just to the type of stereotypical Irish art produced to please the colonial masters, but also to the Revival's tales of ancient Ireland and noble peasants. For Stephen, and arguably for Joyce as well, in both examples there lurks in the background the English cultural tradition--so the mirror is always cracked, and the view of Irish art is always distorted.

Ulysses takes an honest look at Ireland and Irish art by accepting the flaws with humor and by acknowledging the realities of a culture whose traditions have been broken and lost by colonialism. With *Ulysses*, Joyce anticipates and enters the debates about the post-coloniality of Ireland that have occurred recently. For him, Ireland was decidedly in a state of post-coloniality, although he certainly would not have used that term. Ireland's long history as a colony of England, and the unique position of being a white

European colony so close to England geographically, created a society in which identity and culture were particularly difficult concepts. *Ulysses* explores these concepts by examining the role art and literature play in the formation of national identity, the difficulties of defining "Irishness" and "nation," and the problem of finding ways to reflect Irish culture despite the presence of the "cracked lookingglass."

For instance, in the "Syclla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*, Joyce examines the ties between colonialism and the English cultural and literary tradition. This examination is peppered throughout with jabs at the Irish Literary Revivalists and their attempt to create a new Irish tradition. In the episode, which takes place in the National Library, Stephen engages in a dialogue about literature, primarily Shakespeare, with a selection of Dublin's non-fictional literary experts.[69] As M. Keith Booker notes,

> By the time of Joyce, "Shakespeare's" plays were not merely the product of Shakespeare's writing; they were also the product of

[69] The group comprises Thomas William Lyster, librarian of the National Library of Ireland from 1895-1920; John Eglinton (pseudonym of William Kirkpatrick Magee), Irish essayist and an influential figure on the Dublin literary scene, also assistant librarian to Lyster; Mr. Best (Richard Irvin Best), assistant director of the National Library (1904-1923), director from 1924-1940, and translator of *Le Cycle Mythologique Irlandais* by Henri d'Arbois do Joubainville, which is mentioned during the episode; George William Russell (AE), theosophist and poet (Gifford 156, 157, 160). Buck Mulligan (the fictional version of Oliver St. John Gogarty, a one-time roommate of Joyce's and future Irish Senator) and Haines, the Englishman researching Irish folklore, also participate in the conversation.

> centuries of reading and commentary. The Shakespeare Joyce encountered in his youth was thus to a large extent not an Elizabethan author but a Victorian one, his texts having been thoroughly reconstituted by nineteenth-century readings that produced a Shakespeare suitable for use as the major cultural icon of the British Empire. (*Joyce* 3)

Joyce links Shakespeare with the British Empire rather quickly during the discussion of literature when Stephen labels Hamlet "the absent-minded beggar" (187). "The Absent-Minded Beggar" is the title of a propaganda poem by Rudyard Kipling that was intended to raise funds for English troops in the Boer War (Gifford 163). Stephen's reference to the Kipling poem reflects the typical Irish sentiment against the war. The Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902) was seen as one of the most cruel and brutal episodes in British imperial history, since its enemy was of European stock. The Boer resistance to British domination was surprisingly fierce, and the British resorted to the imprisonment of women and children in concentration camps (Booker, *Ulysses* 86).[70] This war also demonstrated to the Irish and to the rest of the world that British imperialism was not the altruistic mission of bringing light to the dark places (and dark peoples) of the world, as jingoistic propagandists such as Kipling would have it seem. The Boers were white, Christian, and of

[70] It is estimated that 28,000 Boer civilians, most of them under the age of sixteen, died in these camps (Booker, *Ulysses* 196n).

European descent. For obvious reasons, the brutality visited upon them and the insistence on the part of the British that they submit to domination had special meaning to the Irish, also European victims of colonial domination. In addition, Irish troops were recruited by the British for service in the war and figured prominently in several important battles. The Irish were often employed in situations where the percentage of casualties was likely to be high, and there was speculation among the Irish that they were being used as cannon fodder (Booker *Ulysses* 88).[71] For these reasons, Irish nationalists, led by Maud Gonne, formed the Irish Transvaal Committee, which organized pro-Boer demonstrations and even raised guerilla units to fight on the side of the Boers.

It is not surprising then that Stephen makes this bitter reference to Kipling, but by suggesting "The Absent-Minded Beggar" as a subtitle for Hamlet, Stephen turns the accusation of complicity in imperial expansion not just on Kipling, a usual suspect, but also onto Shakespeare, the iconic symbol of high English culture. Shortly after this comment, Stephen strengthens both this connection and the identification of the Irish with the Boers by saying,

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[71] The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers lost seventy-two percent of their officers and twenty-seven percent of their men in the battle of Tugela River Valley in February 1900, the highest proportion of any regiment in the war. When news of this was sent to Queen Victoria she commented only, "My brave Irish." When the telegrams reached her in London, the wounded Irish still lay where they fell, untended. (Booker 88-89)

"Khaki Hamlets don't hesitate to shoot. The bloodboltered shambles in act five is a forecast of the concentration camp sung by Mr. Swinburne" (187). The first sentence refers to the British soldiers fighting the Boers. They, unlike Hamlet, are not plagued with indecision. In addition, "Don't hesitate to shoot" was "a rallying cry for Irish anger at the English policy of coercion in the 1880s" (Gifford 163). Stephen then equates the killings at the end of Hamlet with the wholesale killings and brutality of modern warfare typified by the Boer War. The Swinburne poem referred to is the sonnet "On the Death of Colonel Benson" (1901), in which the poet champions the internment of Boer civilians in concentration camps (Gifford 163). Stephen quotes a line from the poem: "Whelps and dams of murderous foes whom none / But we spared" (187). This line, with its reference to the women and children held in the camps, effectively demonstrates the callous attitude the British had toward their non-British subjects, but the lines that follow (and that Stephen does not quote) are even more telling in terms of the role high culture played in the formation of that attitude. The next lines are, "Alone as Milton and Wordsworth found / And hailed their England, when from all around / Howled all the recreant hate of envious knaves" (qtd. in Gifford 163). In the poem Swinburne uses Milton and Wordsworth, literary icons of the past, to set the English apart from their Boer subjects. In this same way, English literature, especially Shakespeare, aided the cause of imperialism by providing evidence

of the cultural and, by extension, moral superiority that was the justification for imperialism (Booker, *Ulysses* 95). Stephen's arguments in this episode highlight the imperialistic uses for English literature.

Immediately before the Hamlet discussion begins, several references to the Celtic Revivalists sets up a comparison between the two "national literatures." First, Stephen mentions "Cranly's eleven true Wicklowmen" and says they are "in the shadow of the glen" (184-85). This is a reference to a claim made by Joyce's friend, J.F. Byrne (whom he fictionalized as Cranly), that twelve determined men (he would be the twelfth) could save Ireland and that they could be found in County Wicklow. *In the Shadow of the Glen* is the title of a 1903 play by J.M. Synge, one of the protestant dramatists of the Irish Literary Revival. Like Yeats, Synge idealized the peasants of Ireland and felt that Ireland's future lay with the strength and purity of spirit that he believed could be found in rural Ireland.[72] These comments are followed by Eglinton's observation that "Our young Irish bards have yet to create a figure which the world will set beside Saxon Shakespeare"(184). This section mocks the Celtic Revivalists such as Yeats for their belief that a national literature could be created simply by returning to the "pure," "simple" Ireland of old. To further strengthen this implication, Mr. Best mentions the Englishman Haines, who

[72] Synge's 1907 play, however, *The Playboy of the Western World*, does not idealize the peasants of Western Ireland that he portrays but rather presents them as an dangerous mob, searching in vain for a hero to lead them.

has gone to buy Hyde's *Lovesongs of Connacht*. Haines is a student of Irish folklore and myth and has been visiting Stephen and Mulligan. Here Joyce has the representative of the colonizer avoiding the learned discussion of English literature taking place in the library so that he can buy a book full of the quaint customs and traditions of the natives. As this section is followed by the lengthy discussion of Hamlet and Shakespeare, the juxtaposition suggests that one type of literature simply cannot hope to compete with the other. It is Joyce's attempt to show that retelling the tales of old Ireland will not stand up to the juggernaut of imperialism and its literary icons.

Shakespeare was the primary English literary icon of imperialism, and Stephen invokes him again in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, this time explicitly linking several of Shakespeare's works to currents in Elizabethan popular and official opinion. Stephen's words here anticipate the arguments of Stephen Greenblatt and other new historicists who demonstrate that Elizabethan England was not the Utopian Golden Age that it often has been presumed to be. In fact, Greenblatt argues that Elizabeth I was "a ruler whose power is constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence visited upon the enemies of that glory" (64). This is similar to the argument Stephen makes in the library. For instance, Stephen compares the nationalistic pride evident in Shakespeare's histories to the jingoism of the British celebrations of victory in the Boer War. By itself, that Stephen (or

Joyce) would point out that Shakespeare reflects English history and English authority as no other author is not particularly enlightening, but Stephen means his comments as a criticism pointing to negative, destructive attitudes such as anti-Semitism, racism, and the kind of unqualified patriotism that imperialism needed to succeed. Stephen says,

> All events brought grist for his mill. Shylock chimes with the jewbaiting that followed the hanging and quartering of the queen's leech Lopez, his Jew's heart being plucked forth while the sheeny was yet alive: *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* with the coming to the throne of a Scotch philosophaster with a turn for witchroasting. The lost armada is his jeer in *Love 'sLabour Lost*. His pageants, the histories, sail fullbellied on a tide of Mafeking enthusiasm. Warwickshire jesuits are tried and we have a porter's theory of equivocation. The *Sea Venture* comes home from Bermudas and the play Renan admired is written with Patsy Caliban,our American cousin.[73] (204-05)

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[73] Gifford provides the following glosses for the comparisons Stephen makes in this quote: "the queen's leech Lopez" was Queen Elizabeth's Jewish physician, Roderigo Lopez. He was accused of accepting a bribe to poison the queen and executed on the basis of little evidence. This incident caused a violent outbreak of anti-Semitism in London. "The Scotch philosopahster," James I of England (1566-1625), was fascinated by witchcraft and as king of Scotland presided over mass witch trials and executions. Stephen suggests here that both plays, with their references to the supernatural, were written to curry favor from King James. The *Sea Venture* was a ship lost in the Bermudas on a voyage to Virginia in 1609. The crew was marooned for ten months, eventually returning to England in 1610, where the accounts of their

The "Mafeking" enthusiasm that Stephen refers to here once again links Shakepeare and the Boer War. Mafeking was a British stronghold in South Africa during the war that successfully endured a long siege in 1899-1900. This resistance triggered massive victory celebrations in London, despite the strategic insignificance of the battle. The term "Mafeking" subsequently came to be used to indicate "extravagant (and essentially unwarranted) display[s] of enthusiasm for the British Empire and expansionist policy" (Gifford 190). When Joyce has Stephen refer to the patriotism found in Shakespeare's plays as "Mafeking," he not only compares Shakespeare's nationalism with the imperialism of the nineteenth century but also suggests it as a source for the invocations of cultural superiority that would go hand in hand with that expansionism.

The "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses* thus examines the use of Shakespeare as an icon of British imperialism. Through the complicated literary discussions, led by the extremist Stephen, Joyce is able to respect the placement of Shakespeare at the center of Western culture but at the same time question the values that placed him there. Shakespeare's unmeasurable literary accomplishments and influence, Joyce seems to be saying, undoubtedly have

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adventures produced considerable excitement. In *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1898), Sidney Lee (mentioned by John Eglinton earlier in the "Scylla" episode) argues that this incident was an inspiration for *The Tempest*. Stephen's comment concurs with Lee's suggestion, but also links the characterization of Caliban to British colonial subjects in Ireland ("Patsy") and in the New World ("*Our American Cousin*") (190-91).

earned him the central role in Western high culture. Stephen, as Jean-Michel Rabaté has argued, is portrayed as a reader as well as a writer, and in the end, perhaps more a reader than a writer, because Joyce never allows him to achieve much in his writing (22-23). Indeed, the contrast between his writing self and his reading self in regard to Shakespeare and the English is interesting. Early in *Ulysses* Stephen attempts to compose a poem based on one of the poems of Douglas Hyde to give to the Englishman Haines. Here Stephen attempts to produce a piece of literature specifically to suit what he sees as English taste. Later, it is for Haines that Stephen launches into his theory of Shakespeare. As Richard Brown argues, "The two types of literary production in which Joyce represents Stephen as being engaged, then, are perhaps both quite specifically kinds of literary production that we might associate with an Irish writer of that moment hoping to gain an audience that is primarily London based" (107). Brown believes that Joyce might have been, through Stephen, expressing his own feelings of failure as a young Irish artist hoping to acheive success writing in English. He says, "for Stephen and Joyce to build their literary productions out of the Shakespearean text might have been one way of forestalling" the literary disappointments caused, in part, by the anti-Anglicism and cultural separatism of the Dublin of the time (107). When seen from this angle, Stephen's engagement with Shakespeare seems to honor his place at the forefront of English literature. However, much of Stephen's arguments bring

into focus the negative legacies of Shakespeare and other English writers and demonstrate that no one, least of all a colonized people such as the Irish, should view any literary influence uncritically.

Joyce does not limit his criticism of the worship of the past to the English and English culture. The "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses* provides a similar indictment of the nostalgic reverence afforded to ancient Irish culture by the nationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ireland. In this episode, which resembles its corresponding episode in *The Odyssey* more closely than any other, Bloom has stopped off at Barney Kiernan's pub, where he engages in conversation with several increasingly drunken men, including the violently nationalistic, anti-Semitic Citizen.

The Citizen is modeled on Michael Cusack (1847-1907), founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, which was dedicated to the revival of Irish sports such as hurling, Gaelic football, and handball. He referred to himself as "Citizen Cusack" and used as his standard greeting, "I'm Citizen Cusack from the Parish of Carron in the Barony of Burre in the County of Clare, you Protestant Dog!" (Gifford 259). Bloom's encounter with The Citizen, which ends with Bloom running from the bar as a biscuit tin is hurled at his head, brings into sharp relief Joyce's ambivalence regarding Irish nationalism. On the one hand, he was disgusted by the exclusionism and racial hatred he saw in the movement, practices that he linked to the revival of the Irish Gaelic

language and ancient Irish myths. On the other hand, the production of a genuine Irish alternative to the cultural identity imposed on Ireland by England was a necessary component of the struggle for liberation. But for Joyce, "genuine Irishness" was not to be found by revisiting the sagas of Chuchulain, but rather in the creation of a character such as Leopold Bloom.

Unlike the xenophobic Citizen, who criticizes the Belgians for their atrocities in the Congo yet does not identify with Africans (or Jews or any other dark-skinned people) as fellow victims of colonization, Bloom espouses a rhetoric of inclusion. He stands for the liberation of Ireland, not just from the imperial bonds of England, but also from the destructive notions of hatred and isolationism that Joyce saw as an undercurrent of Irish nationalism. Bloom argues, although he is ignored, "[I]sn't discipline the same everywhere? I mean wouldn't it be the same here if you put force against force?"(329). In addition, in his place as an outsider in Dublin society, an Irish-born Jew, he represents the qualities, both positive and negative, of modern Ireland. Kenner even claims that the Nationalist desire to find an emblem of Ireland behind which to stand required someone like Bloom. He says, "If Nationalist rhetoric meant anything save empty exhortation to take heart, it meant that the ideal citizen of the New Ireland would be a Jew: someone like the Irish in many belauded ways, but also not a boozer, not a squanderer, not a brawler" (195).[74]

[74] Kenner lists some similarities between the Jews and the Irish: "[b]oth

Bloom is also, in many ways, a failure. He is a cuckolded husband; he even fails to equal that score by being unable to engage in a tryst with his penpal Martha. He is also searching for a replacement to Rudy, his dead son. He believes he has found this in Stephen--but fails here as well when Stephen walks off and leaves him at the end of the novel.

Failure, a central theme in the post-colonial novel, is crucial to Joyce's work.[75] Many of his characters, Gabriel in "The Dead," Mrs. Kearney in "A Mother," Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud," and both Stephen and Bloom in *Ulysses*, fail in the projects they undertake in the course of the narrative. *Ulysses* goes beyond the examination of failure on the narrative level, however; particularly in "The Cyclops" episode, it explores Ireland's failure to resist domination first by England and then by bourgeois sentimentality.

In part, Joyce illuminates this larger failure through parody. Throughout the episode, the narrative shifts back and forth from the first-person narration of an unnamed Dubliner whose dialect marks him as working

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peoples yearned to repossess a little homeland; both, dispersed through the world, resisted assimilation; both claimed racial unity (Celtic, Semitic); both guarded an ancient language (Irish, Hebrew); both rejoiced in a proud remote past when literacy was in the keeping of their scribes." Kenner goes on to that just as Jewish slaves "made bricks for Egypt," Irishmen "laid the tracks along which England's trains rumbled" while being paid starvation wages (194).

[75] Booker argues that "the consistent focus on failure is one of the major characteristics that separates Joyce from the nineteenth century English literary tradition and clearly identifies him as an Irish, rather than a British, writer" (Ulysses 86).

class to the parodic rendition of the nineteenth-century translations and revisions of ancient Irish poetry. The effect of this shifting is to emphasize the irrelevance of such nostalgia of the "sacred" past to the average Irish person, slowly getting drunk in a pub and listening to xenophobic discussions of Ireland's present. For instance, when the narrator first mentions The Citizen, as he enters the pub and sees him from a distance, he sounds like an average Dubliner. He says, "[T]here sure enough was the citizen up in the corner having a great confab with himself and that bloody mangy mongrel, Garryowen, and he waiting for what the sky would drop in the way of a drink" (295). However, a few sentences later, the style switches to parody of the revisions of ancient myth, and a longer description of The Citizen is given:

> The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freely freckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero. From shoulder to shoulder he measured several ells and his rocklike mountainous knees were covered, as was likewise the rest of his body wherever visible, with a strong growth of tawny prickly hair in hue and toughness similar to the mountain gorse (*Ulex Europeus*). The widewinged nostrils, from which bristles of the same tawny hue projected, were of such capaciousness that within their

> cavernous obscurity the fieldlark might easily have lodged her nest. The eyes in which a tear and a smile strove ever for the mastery were of the dimensions of a good sized cauliflower. . . .(296)

This description goes on describe The Citizen's clothing in the same hyperbolic language, relying on the stereotypes of ancient Celtic heroes to depict each element. To close the description, the narrator recites the first of many lists included in this chapter, this one a catalogue of the images that hang from The Citizens's belt. Included in this list of "Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity" are Dante Alghieri, Christopher Columbus, Charlemagne, the Mother of the Maccabees, the Last of the Mohicans, The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, Benjamin Franklin, Cleopatra, Ludwig Beethoven, Adam and Eve, and Gautama Buddha; he also includes two famous figures who have been "Celticized," Patrick W. Shakespeare and Brian Confucius (296-97). This list simultaneously parodies the Irish nationalist attempts to romanticize their ancestors (both distant and recent) and the epic cataloguing style found in Homer. Booker suggests that one could also read this passage as a suggestion that the Irish are relatively unheroic relative to their epic predecessors, the Greeks (*Joyce* 23). However, given the liberties Joyce takes in reworking Homer, which are hardly reverential, it is more likely that such lists serve to demonstrate that the Greeks used epics as a political tool as well, and that no texts should be seen as sacred artifacts free from ideology. For

instance, Joyce has turned Odysseus's battlefield into a pub and he has turned the fearful cyclops into a self-styled defender of empty Irish rhetoric. In perhaps the most ignoble substitution, the boulder hurled at our hero has become a biscuit tin. In fact, throughout *Ulysses*, as the most mundane details of Bloom's day are compared to the monumental adventures of Homer's hero, the sanctity of the ancient text is assaulted again and again.

While the disruption of Homer's text here and elsewhere in *Ulysses* does question the sacredness of that text, the main targets of Joyce's parody in the "Cyclops" episode are Irish Nationalists and, through their connection to nationalism, the texts of the Irish Literary Revival. One of the most biting, and hilarious, scenes in this vein occurs when The Citizen's dog, the Irish Wolfdog Garryowen, recites a verse, which is determined to "bear a *striking* resemblance . . . to the ranns of ancient Celtic bards."[76] The poem, we are told, resembles the poetry of Donald MacConsidine, a nineteenth-century poet from the west of Ireland who wrote in Gaelic and whose works formed the basis for Douglas Hyde's *Love Songs of Connaught* (Quintelli-Neary 45). As noted earlier, Hyde's theories on Gaelic language and culture and his works,

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[76] Heightening the symbolism here is that the dog's name, Garryowen, is also a suburb of Limerick "famous for its squalor and for the crudity and brutality of its inhabitants." However, when the dog begins to recite, his name is changed to Owen Garry, the name of a semi-legendary king of Leinster and a friend of Finn Mac Cool's (Gifford 262, 278). It should also be noted that Joyce is also mocking the guttural sound of Gaelic—by having the dog's growling voice be the only representation of the language in the scene.

such as this one, arguably sparked the Irish Literary Revival. This particular work is referred to mockingly several times in *Ulysses* (48, 132, 198, 312). Joyce uses the most fantastic feature of this passage, that a dog is speaking in Gaelic verse, to highlight his disdain for exclusionary Celticism espoused by many in the nationalist movement. Joyce once wrote to his brother that he might consider himself a Nationalist were it not for the movement's insistence on the Irish language and it rhetoric of racial purity (qtd. in Cheng 192). A less obvious detail is his reference to the "ranns of ancient Celtic bards." According to Marguerite Quintelli-Neary, a *rann* is an embellishment found in traditional Irish poetry, the effect of which cannot be translated into English (45). Joyce uses these details to suggest that the ancient Irish hero cannot be translated into modern Ireland either. This is demonstrated by the failure of The Citizen as a positive symbol for modern Ireland. He may be a loyal, proud Irishman--but he is also a racist, narrow-minded, violent, drunken idiot who talks to his dog.

As noted above, this episode resembles more closely than others the corresponding episode in *The Odyssey*. In Book IX of Homer's epic, Odysseus and his men find themselves among the giant, one-eyed Cyclops. They have been trapped in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, who scoffs at the laws of society delivered by Zeus and acts out his rebelliousness by eating two of the men. The following night, Odysseus plies the monster with wine and when he

has collapsed, blinds him with a burning stake. He also tells Polyphemus that his name is "Noman"; consequently, when the cyclops cries that "Noman" has ruined him, his neighbors mock him and refuse to give him aid. In the morning, Odysseus and his remaining men are able to escape by hiding from the blind Polyphemus among the sheep. Safe on his ship, Odysseus taunts Polyphemus and makes the mistake of giving his real name. Polyphemus hurls a rock that almost sinks the ship and prays to his father, Poseidon, to curse Odysseus, which he does.

In Joyce's episode, Bloom argues with the increasingly drunken Citizen, who, like Polyphemus, is only capable of one point of view. The single eye of Polyphemus represents his individuality and his refusal to participate in the community, an attitude Homer saw as detrimental to the Greek political system (Booker, *Joyce* 23). Similarly, the Citizen's monomaniacal nationalistic vision keeps him from seeing Ireland as a pluralistic society and from relating to the other colonized peoples of the world. Joyce emphasizes this problem by conflating nationalism with anti-Semitism and racism. For instance, The Citizen says of the Jews, "Those are nice things. . . coming over here to Ireland filling the country with bugs." Immediately after this comment he says, "We want no more strangers in our house" (323), a phrase commonly used by nationalists to refer to the British.[77] The Citizen not only wants the British out

[77] The phrase is also used by Cathleen in Yeats's play *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*

of Ireland, but also wants to remove everyone who is not "Irish" as well. He asks Bloom, "What is your nation . . . ?" and is told, "Ireland. I was born here. Ireland" (331). This statement is met by The Citizen clearing his throat, spitting into the corner, and mocking Bloom by reciting an "oath" to ancient Irish culture. Bloom, finally pushed to anger, says, "[A]nd I belong to a race too, that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant" (332). None of the men in the pub is able identify with Bloom's belonging to a persecuted race. In fact, instead of empathizing with Bloom, The Citizen claims kinship with "our greater Ireland across the sea," a reference to the many Irish immigrants in the United States. He says that "they will come again and with a vengeance . . .the sons of Kathleen ni Houlihan" (329-330). The Citizen believes himself, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, to be part of a mighty nation capable of destroying her oppressors. The irony in the fact that the Citizen and the other men fail to make a comparison between the persecution of the Irish and the persecution of the Jews is further emphasized by their discussions of other colonized peoples of the British empire. They are most assuredly anti-British, but they espouse the same racist values that help make imperialism possible in the first place. The Citizen reads aloud from a newspaper account of the 1904 visit to England of a

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(1902). Stephen refers to this play in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, saying, "Gap-toothed Kathleen, her four beautiful green fields, the stranger in her house" (184-85). The "four green fields" refers to the original provinces of Ireland, Leinster, Munster, Ulster, and Connaught.

"Zulu Chief," whom he identifies as the "Alaki of Abeakuta."[78] In this description and the discussion that follows, The Citizen uses language that makes clear his disdain for British imperialism but at the same time shows his view of the "Zulu chief" as a ridiculous savage visiting a civilized land (334). For instance, in this description he sarcastically describes the English as "tender[ing] to His Majesty the heartfelt thanks of British traders for the facilities afforded them in his dominions." Later in his account he mocks the king by saying

> The Alaki then drank a lovingcup . . .from the skull of his immediate predecessor in the dynasty Kakachakachak, surnamed Forty Warts, after which he visited the chief factory of Cottonopolis and signed his mark in the visitors' book, subsequently executing an old Abeakutic wardance, in the course of which he swallowed several knives and forks, amid hilarious applause from the girl hands. (334)

This discussion is followed by a mention of the Belgian Congo and the atrocities committed there. The Citizen notes with pride that the person whose published report exposed the extreme cruelties of the Belgians in the Congo,

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[78] Booker reports that the Alaki of Abeakuta did in fact visit London in 1904, but that while Zulus live in South Africa, Abeakuta is in Western Nigeria. Booker speculates that this confusion may suggest that the racist Citizen sees no difference in different tribal affiliations among black Africans (99). In addition, the failure of The Citizen to identify with black Africans whom he believes to live in South Africa when he would most certainly have been in support of the white South African Boers highlights his racism as well.

Roger Casement, was an Irishman, but shows no sympathy at all for the natives (335). Finally, the contradiction inherent in The Citizens's anti-imperialism and racism is cemented when immediately after this racist discussion he refers to Bloom as "that whiteeyed kaffir"--a term taken from a Kipling poem where it is used to refer to black Africans who supported the Boers during the Boer War (Booker 22). Because The Citizen clearly means the term derogatorily, he unknowingly aligns himself with the cause of British imperialism. Just as Polyphemus's individualism and lack of community enabled Odysseus's tricks to succeed, The Citizen's inability to see the failure inherent in his rhetoric of hatred and racism, Joyce seems to be saying, will be Ireland's downfall as well.

While The Citizen and Polyphemus have quite a bit in common--both are monomaniacal, both have command over a captive audience, and both are easily driven to anger by a seemingly lesser opponent--Bloom is a less exact counterpart for Odysseus. There are several superficial similarities between the two heroes, peppered throughout the novel. The most obvious parallels are that Bloom, like Odysseus, is competing for the affections of his wife and that both men have lost a son. Of course, Bloom's wife is having an affair under his nose while Penelope does everything she can to stave off her would-be suitors. Similarly, Bloom's real son, Rudy, is dead, and his surrogate, Stephen, abandons him. Telemachus, on the other hand, searches desperately for his father once he is old enough to do so. In these and many other details, Bloom

represents Odysseus--if he were a failure.[79] This fundamental difference between the two characters is demonstrated well in the "Cyclops" episode. Like Homer's hero, Bloom cannot resist a parting shot at his tormentor. As he hurries from the pub he shouts, "Mendelssohn was a Jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. And the Savior was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God" (342). Just as Polyphemus hurled the boulder, the enraged Citizen flings a biscuit tin and narrowly misses Bloom's head. He rides away, feeling so victorious that he metaphorically ascends to heaven in a chariot as did the prophet Elijah.

However, his victory is not as clear-cut as he would have it. As Cheng notes, Mercadante was not a jew and Joseph was not Christ's father (214). His point is made, but as usual, he fails to get the facts straight. And although his parting shot is an effective one, his arguments while he is in the bar do not do justice to the famed wit and rhetorical skill of his predecessor, Odysseus. Instead, Bloom's rhetoric is limited to sentimental cliché that reaches its high point when he declares "love" to be the meaning of life. The examples of "true

[79] Hugh Kenner also points out that Bloom and Odysseus share other surface characteristics, but Joyce hides these from the reader. For instance, Bloom, like Odysseus, is taller than the average citizen. At five foot nine and a half he would have been considerably taller than the average Dubliner. But no one in the text mentions Bloom's stature and his height is only mentioned once, late in the book. As Kenner says, "[M]ost readers miss it and think of Bloom as a little man." Also, Bloom and Odysseus both live at "the highest point within the city's old boundaries." Bloom's home, 7 Eccles Street, does qualify for this title, but that fact is not mentioned in the book. As Kenner says, one would learn this only "by visiting Dublin and walking" (195).

love" are delivered in a parody that resembles, as Gifford puts it, "sentimental adult child-talk" (298). For instance, the passage begins "Love loves to love love," and includes among its examples "Jumbo, the elephant, loves Alice, the elephant." Booker explains that Jumbo, a popular resident of the London Zoo, was sold to P.T. Barnum in 1882, forcing him to leave Alice, his heartsick girlfriend behind. This story was heavily sentimentalized in the press at the time (*Joyce* 23). Even though he claims victory, Bloom's rhetoric is tawdry and sentimental. He is fashioned as an Odysseus--but has little of the substance.

By this unfavorable comparison, one could assume that Joyce means to infer that modern Dublin cannot compare to ancient Greece--that neither her heroes nor her values carry the same weight. But the societal ills against which which our modern "hero" (Bloom) stands--racism, anti-Semitism, violence, hatred--are so clearly and unquestionably wrong that this passage also forces the reader to question the authority of Homer's epic. In other words, if Bloom can be sentimental and weak, but morally superior to his enemies, then could not such contradictions exist in the story of Odysseus as well? In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin writes that in an epic such as *The Odysseus* authority is unquestioned. He says, "In the past, everything is good; all the really good things . . . occur *only* in this past. The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well" (15).

But the novel as a genre, Bakhtin argues, challenges authority. It engages history and "comes into contact with spontaneity of the inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing" (27). *Ulysses* not only wrestles with the present in this way, but it also takes on the past. Indeed, the novel was written from 1918 to 1922 yet set on a day in 1904, before some of the crucial moments in contemporary Irish history, such as the Easter Uprising (1916) and the creation of the Irish Free State (1923). By the time Joyce wrote, much of Dublin's topography, so carefully reconstructed in *Ulysses*, had changed (Tymoczko 35). If, in *Ulysses*, Joyce can reconstruct Dublin's past in order to engage with its present, then the manner in which he reconstructs literary texts of the past can change the ways they are read in the present as well.

For example, most critics refer to Joyce's reinscriptions of previous texts in *Ulysses* as "parodies." Although some of these passages are engaged in the most common form of parody, shedding light on the text being parodied by mocking it in some way, most of the parodies in *Ulysses* fall in line with Bakhtin's definition of parody. He calls effective parody "an international dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another" (76). Just as the entire text engages with Homer in this way, changing the way *The Odyssey* is read, the "Oxen of the Sun" episode does the same thing with the entire history of English prose. In this episode, Joyce parodies, in roughly chronological order, authors and styles ranging from

Anglo-Saxon sermons to Sir Walter Raleigh to Daniel Defoe to Charles Dickens; he then ends the episode with a hodgepodge of slang from throughout the British empire. As the English prose style progresses through the episode, the narration corresponds with the embryological development of a child from conception to birth. The characters in the episode, Stephen, several of his medical student friends, and Bloom, are at the National Maternity Hospital awaiting the end of Mina Purefoy's labor, which has been going on for three days.

As Robert Janusko points out, the correspondence of authors to stages in this sequence does not have much bearing on meaning in this chapter. Although Joyce did rely on a gestation chart while constructing "Oxen," the final outcome does not reflect an exact replication of prenatal growth. Janusko claims that he used this structure only as a guide and changed elements where he felt necessary (4). In addition, Janusko argues that "none of the authors parodied in the 'Oxen' represents the fetus per se; they represent stages in the chronological development of English literary history" (4). Why then, does Joyce combine these two developmental sequences?

Returning to Bakhtin's definition of parody quoted above, the idea "that within it languages and styles mutually illuminate one another" helps to explain this combination. In rewriting Homer, Joyce illuminates, among other things, the cracks in the wall of authority granted to the epic. His text

questions the wholeness and the sacredness of the previous text. In parodying in "Oxen of the Sun," he performs a similar task with each of those texts.[80] He shows that he is able to assume the mask of each author and to comment on the action in the guise of Swift the satirist or Bunyan the moralist or Dickens the sentimentalist. In doing so, Joyce forces the reader to envision how different authors would describe the same scene. Seeing the scene from multiple viewpoints in turn causes the reader to question the authority of the texts themselves--both the ones written before and the ones being written now.

These multiple viewpoints come at the reader along with the evolution of prenatal life, which has the effect of elevating the cause of fertility over sterility. The chapter begins with three incantations that celebrate fertility. The first, "Deshil Holles Eamus," is Gaelic and roughly means, "Turning toward the sun to Holles Street, let us go" (Gifford 336).[81] The second, "Send us, bright one, light one, Horhorn, quickening and wombfruit" is another incantation to the sun as a source of fertility. Finally, the third incantation, "Hoopsa, boyaboy, hoopsa!" (383) is the "cry with which a midwife celebrates the birth of a boy as she bounces it to stabilize its breathing" (Gifford 336). From its opening with these celebratory incantations, the episode then goes on to celebrate conception, fertility, and birth through the journey from sperm and

[80] Janusko notes that many, though not all, of the parodies are based on specific passages in specific texts (56).

[81] The National Maternity Hospital was located on Holles Street (Gifford 336).

ovum to human child. Joyce wrote that the idea in this episode was "the crime committed against fecundity by sterilizing the act of coition" (qtd. in Ellmann 489-90). As the texts of English literature move along with the growing fetus, the effect is to impose fertility on those texts and not to sterilize them by allowing them to remain closed and stagnant and only in the past. The chapter shows us that texts can change even after they are written.

In addition, the narrator of the episode also cautions "Therefore, everyman, look to that last end that is thy death and dust that gripeth on every man that is born of woman for as he came naked forth from his mother's womb so naked shall he wend him at the last for to go as he came" (386). While pointing out that all humans begin in the same way and combining this warning with the history of British literature, Joyce also warns against giving authority to that literature because it is generated by the dominant culture. In this chapter, after all, an Irishman rewrites England's literary history, within the framework a revisioning of one of the epic texts of Western civilization. In creating a text that questions the sacredness and the wholeness of texts that came before it, Joyce purposefully sets up a dynamic that forces the reader to question the wholeness of *Ulysses*. It is a multivalent text, offering a precise topographical view of Dublin in 1904, but showing within that view how heterogeneous and pluralistic the city actually was. It asks the reader to accept difference and to see sameness within that difference at the same time, rather

than ascribe to a binary polarization that forces clearly delineated visions of Self and Other.

The chapters I have discussed in *Ulysses* primarily ask for this simultaneous acceptance of heterogeneity and difference, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the potential sameness and solidarity of shared similarities-in-difference in terms of Irish nationalism and the role literature has played both in that nationalist movement and in forming the empire that the movement works against. Joyce was vehemently against the kind of racial exclusion he felt was advanced by the Irish Literary Revival. Ireland's liberation, he felt, depended on adapting to modernity, not hiding from it by cloaking oneself in the past.

Afterword

All of the modern and contemporary texts discussed in this dissertation have at least one thing in common besides their having originated from countries formerly colonized by the British. They all require the active participation of the reader to interpret and understand fully their intertextuality. In other words, the full impact of these texts and how and why authors use other texts cannot be appreciated without the reader's prior knowledge of those texts. This is not to suggest that the texts cannot be understood and appreciated on other levels, for they certainly may be. For instance, one need not have read *Great Expectations* to be able to understand the terrors of Jack Maggs's childhood, his obsessive desire to turn Henry into an English gentleman, or his actions in trying to hide his past. One does not even need to know Dickens in order to understand Tobias Oates's motivation in misrepresenting Jack's story. However, without this knowledge, it is impossible to recognize the statement Carey is making with this novel on how Dickens contributed to the image of Australians in popular consciousness. Thus, we would also miss the further implications regarding the importance of the role of literature in furthering the aims of empire. In addition, if we do not see Tobias as the fictionalized stand-in for one of the most widely read and influential authors of the nineteenth century, then our perception of him as

dishonest and sensationalistic might end there, as merely an indictment of Toby, rather than a comment on nineteenth-century narrative in general.

In Chapter One, I cited Roland Barthes's comment that traditionally, texts are seen as artifacts that must be approached by readers in a passive way. Rewriting, as I have discussed it here, challenges this approach, asking much of readers and empowering them in the process. Michel Butor explains the process in this way:

> We are part of a complex of evolving cultures within which all sorts of illusions and blunders are made. To rid ourselves of them we must bring references out into the open and put them to the text. To work on quotations is to give prominence to the fact that one is never sole author of a text, that culture is a tissue; . . . All this undermines the walls set up by our society between author and reader, singular and plural; it is an awakening and a liberation. (qtd. in Newman 191).

Breaking down these walls is especially important for postcolonial authors because the centrality of the English canon to their education has made them acutely aware of the influence literature can have on ideology and perception. It is no wonder, then, that many postcolonial authors continue to produce works that are themselves interpretations of the literature they rewrite. These authors use rewriting to expose and dismantle the ideological assumptions created by the domination of the native culture as they are creating new

constructions that reflect themselves and their culture as they see it—not as others see it. They take back the power of description that imperialism had taken from them, and in doing so, they create a new, stronger postcolonial subject, more resistant to dismantling than before.

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