Kunapipi

Volume 16 | Issue 3

1994

Kunapipi 16 (3) 1994 Full Version

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individuals: 1 year: DKK150 / £15 / US$35 / AUS$45 / CAN$45
3 years: DKK400 / £40 / US$90 / AUS$120 / CAN$120

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ISSN 0106-5734
Kunapipi

VOLUME XVI NUMBER 3, 1994

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Acknowledgements

Kunapipi is published with assistance from the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the Federal Government’s arts funding and advisory body, and the European branch of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies.

COVER: Crotchetted doily from 1916

Kunapipi refers to the Australian Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol both of creativity and regeneration. The journal’s emblem is to be found on an Aboriginal shield from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory in Australia.
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Maps, however symbolically, indicate the materiality of empires as physical space measured in degrees of latitude and longitude. Materiality is also experienced, often brutally, by the colonized as physical force exerted by armies of invasion and occupation. The constant interaction between periphery and centre on which empires depend is also expressed materially, through the exchange of trade commodities or the regular movement of colonial administrators to and from the centre, but symbol and metaphor are equally important. If nations are, in Benedict Anderson's words, 'imagined communities', then empires require still more abundant imagination to maintain disparate races and cultures as part of a cohesive whole. Consequently, texts of empire are continually fabricated and refabricated by colonisers and colonised alike, while images of cloth and weaving, with their associated imagery of narrative construction, can play an important part both in asserting bonds of empire and in challenging them.

In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow, entering a waiting room in the European office of his future employers, observes a map 'marked with all the colours of a rainbow'.

There was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre.¹

This description is framed by an account of two women attendants, one young, one old, continuously knitting with black wool, who admit prospective employees into the waiting room. Marlow dwells on the older woman:

An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinizing the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. *Ave!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morituri te salutant.* Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again – not half by a long way. (146-7)
In a novel where thread, cloth and clothing form a significant sub-strand of imagery, Conrad offers two images of fabric and fabrication in relation to empire – the map, which resembles patchwork, and knitting.

The fabric of empires, pieced together on the map, combines different geographical regions and cultures rather like crazy patchwork, where irregularly shaped scraps of coloured cloth are stitched onto a plain ground. Marlow describes his boyhood delight in maps which revealed what, from a purely European perspective, seemed the blank spaces of the earth, one of which still fascinated him as an adult. 'It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness' (142). By implication, the appearance of multicoloured patches of European imperialism on a formerly 'blank' space has contributed substantially to creating this place of darkness. The patchwork motif reappears later in Marlow's description of the harlequin figure.

His clothes had been made of some stuff that was brown holland probably, but it was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow, – patches on the back, patches on the front, patches on elbows, on knees; coloured binding around his jacket, scarlet edging at the bottom of his trousers; and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all this patching had been done. (212)

Red and blue dominate the map described earlier, with yellow indicating the African colony where the narrative unfolds. The harlequin, while foolish, appears a fabulous character in traditional clown’s motley – a stage performer enveloped in and shielded by youthful glamour, inspired perhaps by romantic enthusiasm similar to the excitement blank spaces on maps had once aroused in Marlow himself. He has patched his clothes with material stolen from Kurtz’s store-room, although it is unclear whether the cloth is of native manufacture (for the tribes of the Congo basin have a rich tradition of cloth making) or whether it is some of the ‘ghastly glazed calico’ and ‘confounded spotted handkerchiefs’ traded with the Africans for ivory. The anger this theft arouses in Kurtz’s lover, the African woman, whom Marlow equates with the ‘tenebrous and passionate soul’ of the African wilderness, links it to the much greater theft signified by the coloured patches on the map.²

The two knitters guarding entry to the heart of darkness are another key image in the novel. There is a link with mythological figures of the Fates weaving the thread of human life, as well as with the tricoteuses sitting alongside the guillotine in the French Revolution, and also perhaps with Conrad’s image of a mechanical, unfeeling universe, which renders impossible any hopes for moral growth within society, described in a letter to R.B.Cunninghame Graham.
There is a — let us say — a machine. It evolved itself (I am severely scientific) out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! — it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider — but it goes on knitting. . . . You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is a tragic accident — and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it.

In virtue of that truth one and immortal which lurks in the force that made it spring into existence it is what it is — and it is indestructible!

It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions — and nothing matters. I'll admit however that to look at the remorseless process is sometimes amusing.3

The moral monstrousness of the woven design is indicated by descriptions of the African working party enslaved by colonialism and linked together with chains that Marlow sees on first arriving in the country. Then there is the dying African with a piece of white worsted round his neck. 'Was it a badge — an ornament — a charm — a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it? It looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas'(157). The twisted wool indicates both imposed bondage and the threads of trade and administration which bind this country to the colonising power. But the image of the two women knitting represents more than the workings of destiny, it also relies on ancient associations between textile skills and story telling. Marlow, described as 'a spinner of yarns'(138), is himself, along with the yarn he spins, knitted into the wider, impersonal fabric of African exploration and European colonisation.

Heart of Darkness forms an important point of intertextual reference for Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook where empire is imaged as woven tapestry. Just as Marlow, sailing up the Congo, penetrates not only the heart of the 'dark continent', but the dark recesses of human behaviour as well, so Lessing's protagonist, a writer called Anna Wulf, who has also lived in Africa, discovers she too must explore the heart of darkness at the centre of her own personality if she is to write fiction which approximates in any way to truth. Like Marlow, who indicates parallels between Africa and Britain, the Congo and the Thames, she also discovers the heart of darkness at the centre of empire. London is represented in The Golden Notebook not merely as a centre of British imperialism, but as a great centre of capitalist hegemony, for Anna is committed to the ideals of socialism and is, for much of the novel, a member of the Communist Party. In 'The Red Notebook' section, concerned mainly with Anna's political involvement, she records a dream:

I dreamed marvellously. I dreamed there was an enormous web of beautiful fabric stretched out. It was incredibly beautiful covered all over with embroidered pictures. The pictures were illustrations of the myths of mankind but they were not just
pictures, they were the myths themselves, so that the soft glittering web was alive. There were many subtle and fantastic colours, but the overall feeling this expanse of fabric gave was of redness, a sort of variegated glowing red. In my dream I handled and felt this material and wept with joy. I looked again and saw that the material was shaped like a map of the Soviet Union. It began to grow: it spread out, lapped outwards like a soft glittering sea. It included now the countries around the Soviet Union, like Poland, Hungary, etc., but at the edges it was transparent and thin. I was still crying with joy. Also with apprehension. And now the soft red glittering mist spread over China and it deepened over China into a hard heavy clot of scarlet. And now I was standing out in space somewhere,...I stood in a blue mist of space while the globe turned, wearing shades of red for the communist countries, and a patchwork of colours for the rest of the world. Africa was black, but a deep, luminous, exciting black, like a night where the moon is just below the horizon and will soon rise.

The red areas are gradually invaded by colours of other countries with the different hues flowing and merging until the entire world unifies into one beautiful, glittering colour Anna has never seen before. The sight inspires deep joy, but suddenly everything explodes and the world flies into fragments leaving only empty space. She hears a voice saying, 'Somebody pulled a thread of the fabric and it all dissolved'(294). Images of weaving and embroidery combine in an ironic commentary on Marlow's view of the map in Heart of Darkness where the red patches of British imperialism carry very different meanings from those representing the Soviet imperium in Anna's vision. But the dream's context within The Golden Notebook is more painfully ironic, sandwiched as it is between diary entries recounting conflict in Anna's local Communist Party branch where the faithful try to hold disillusionment at bay by clinging to a tissue of lies and misrepresentation woven by the Party hierarchy to explain and justify Stalin's policies. By portraying the Soviet Union and its associated countries as woven fabric covered in a living embroidery of human myths, Lessing emphasises the constructedness of nations, empires and political systems to which mythmaking and storytelling contribute so significantly. But those with a vested interest in promoting political allegiance are anxious to conceal the fabricated nature of the narratives and signs underpinning it. Roland Barthes' famous analysis of a photograph in Paris-Match of a black soldier saluting the French flag demonstrates how ideology seeks to convert culture into Nature.

In the case of the soldier-Negro, for instance, what is got rid of is certainly not French imperialism (on the contrary, since what must be actualized is its presence); it is the contingent, historical, in one word: fabricated, quality of colonialism. Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact.
Fabrics are particularly interesting signifiers of empire, for they are both fabric and fabrication, magical pieces of cloth which, erected on the soil of one country, can absorb it into the substance of another, even when located on the other side of the globe. Indeed flags and military uniforms are two powerful examples of how political and religious elites in many different parts of the world still depend quite literally on cloth to mobilize human emotions.  

Tennyson's poem 'The Defence of Lucknow' demonstrates Barthes' view of historical circumstances purified by imperial myth.

Banner of England, not for a season, O banner of Britain, hast thou
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry!
Never with mightier glory than when we had rear'd thee on high
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Lucknow —
Shot through the staff or the halyard, but ever we raised thee anew
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

The Union Jack, continuously kept aloft, signifies not only indomitability, but vulnerability, because of the presence of British women and children amongst the besieged, with the distressing prospect of rape should the opposing Indian soldiers, represented here as wild animals, prove victorious.

There was a whisper among us, but only a whisper that past:
'Children and wives — if the tigers leap into the fold
unawares —
Every man die at his post — and the foe may outlive us at last —
Better to fall by the hands that they love, than to fall into theirs!' (1252)

Wives and children are yet another form of colonial possession, so defence of empire is equated with civilization protecting families against barbarians at the gate. The entire poem smoothly elides the commercial and political advantages the British derived from their occupation of India and the accompanying oppression and dispossession which prompted the Indians to revolt. But, in lines which correspond remarkably to Barthes' interpretation of the picture of the African saluting the tricolour — 'look at this good Negro who salutes like one of our own boys' — Tennyson celebrates those Indians who stood by the British.

Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the dark face have his due!
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us,
faithful and few,
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and
smote them, and slew,
That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India
blew. (1253)

Because of its immense semiotic potential, cloth belongs in both the
material and metaphysical realms. As material substance it figures largely
in national economies and trade exchanges, while operating as a powerful
symbol of social cohesion, evoking as it does ideas of connectedness and
tying, and in many societies it has 'furthered the organization of social
and political life'. Colonialism intervened massively, as an economic and
political force, in processes of cloth production, causing severe cultural
dislocations among colonised peoples, for whom creation and exchange of
cloth was crucially important in determining patterns of social relation­
ship. In India, the British, eager to emphasise distinctions between
European and native dress, enforced an 'orientalist' dress code upon the
Indians, based on very imperfect understanding of local customs. They
also undermined the centuries old cotton textile industry to ensure the
advantage of Lancashire cotton manufacture, so that India was eventually
transformed 'from the world's most advanced producer of cotton textiles
to an exporter of raw cotton and an importer of cloth', resulting
in increased poverty, famine and disease. Ultimately, however, this led to
cloth production becoming a site of nationalist resistance, through the
boycotting of English cotton goods. One of Gandhi's most important
political moves in the struggle for independence was to lead a revival of
handspinning so that the resulting cotton material, khadi, became accepted
garb for asserting Indian national identity. British authorities, royalty
included, were forced to receive him in peasant dress made from
handspun cotton, thereby accepting his political position and revealing
their own loss of power:

He used his appearance to communicate his most important messages in a form
comprehensible to all Indians. Engaged in the simple labor of spinning, dressed as
one of the poor in loincloth and chudar, this important and powerful man communi­
cated the dignity of poverty, the dignity of labor, the equality of all Indians, and the
greatness of Indian civilization, as well as his own saintliness.

An image of the charka, or spinning wheel, now holds pride of place on
the Indian flag, celebrated rather wryly by the contemporary poet, Kamala
Das, as embodying ideals still far from realised:

The orange stands for fire, for fire that eats
Us all in the end . . .

The white stands for purity that we dream of and
Never find

The green stands for pastures of Paradise
Where even the poor

May have a place. The wheel in the centre,
Stationary stands

For what else but time, arrested falsely
By human hands?\(^{13}\)

In most societies, cloth is gendered, usually through its association with women. By elevating homespun cotton cloth and the peasant woman's spinning wheel, as 'central, unifying symbols of the national struggle for liberation from British rule',\(^{14}\) Gandhi refabricated Indian national identity, at the same time representing himself as 'female', performing 'feminine' roles like spinning.\(^{15}\) But, despite adopting the 'feminine' mode of passive resistance in promoting the national struggle for independence and validating female participation in that struggle, Gandhi's views on appropriate roles for women were not so very far removed from nineteenth century British attitudes.\(^{16}\) He went as far 'as "extending" women's roles as wives and mothers, but not in making interventions in patriarchal order or political power'.\(^{17}\) Although women in colonised countries might be recruited by nationalist leaders to participate in anti-colonialist struggles, after independence they usually found themselves relegated to a subordinate role, often entrenched by nineteenth century colonialism through missionary urging that they take up and confine themselves to the kind of domestic tasks defined as feminine in a European, middle-class milieu - sewing, housekeeping, childcare and cooking.\(^{18}\)

Ideals of womanhood and femininity are themselves fabrications to which textiles in their various forms have contributed both materially and imaginatively. Cloth and its production held a place in the lives of women colonists, often indicating their complex role both as colonisers and as colonial subjects. In nineteenth century England, middle- and upper-class young women were expected to acquire a range of accomplishments, of little practical value, which helped define femininity - music, sketching, fancy needlework, collecting flowers, pressing and arranging them. In *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), Catharine Traill describes how, on the voyage from Britain, she kept boredom at bay with needlework - 'women have always their needle as a resource against the overwhelming weariness of an idle life'. Emigration, however, usually put an end to idleness, and ladylike accomplishments survived only in drastically modified form. Later experience led Traill to list a highly exacting set of requirements for a settler's wife:
...she must become skilled in the arts of sugar-boiling, candle and soap-making, the making and baking of huge loaves, cooked in the bake-kettle, unless she be the fortunate mistress of a stone or clay oven. She must know how to manufacture hop-rising or salt-rising for leavening her bread; salting meat and fish, knitting stockings and mittens and comforters, spinning yarn...making clothes for herself, her husband and children. 19

In letters from Australia, Rachel Henning describes how the whole household had to help mend harness, make canvas bags and stuff and line saddles: 'I added lining saddles to my knowledge of fancy needlework'. 20 Many of these middle-class women settlers expressed anxiety lest the need to undertake forms of domestic labour, relegated to servants when in Britain, might render them déclassé, and letters and memoirs show them trying to negotiate their status as ladies in circumstances which frequently undermined it.

Sometimes, colonial life seemed to challenge not only established class hierarchies, but the very nature of femininity, for the ideology of womanhood on which British imperialist ideology depended was essentially contradictory. On the one hand, women's supposed delicacy and fragility justified the imperial struggle:

The ladies at home were both the motive for fighting and striving, in themselves – in their need for protection, and their ability to offer rewards to the victor – and the guardians and transmitters of a more abstract justification, of ideals, a sense of purpose and rectitude. They were both the warriors' prize and the embodied ideal. 21

On the other hand, the empire required women as breeding stock, for there were fears lest the British birth-rate prove insufficient to people the imperial territories, leaving openings for more populous countries such as Germany or the United States to take over. 22 This need for healthy child-bearers who could withstand the physical hardships of pioneering in remote imperial outposts, conflicted with ideals of the passive, delicate Victorian lady, prone to ill health, but guardian of spiritual values of hearth and home, 23 and letters and journals of many nineteenth century women settlers show them wrestling with this contradiction.

But dominant ideologies of femininity were so powerful that women colonists, even while they themselves were being reconstructed through new experience, struggled to reconstitute the safe domestic enclosures society decreed they should inhabit. With increasing consolidation of British settlement in countries like Canada and Australia, women's crafts functioned once more as markers of class division, even though this was less rigidly maintained than in Britain.

Women of the upper classes tended to spend their creative forces on work for the home which was highly ornamental and decorative, whereas women of lesser means were more concerned with making functional objects of necessity. 24
Very occasionally, colonial women's textile skills might be employed in the cause of resistance, as in the 1854 goldfields' Eureka uprising in Australia where the rebel flag, with its white cross and stars on a blue ground, has been described as 'the earliest Australian women's communal artwork'. But women were more likely to endorse imperial values with their needles, embroidering patriotic motifs - British and colonial mingled - on quilts or wall hangings, while in war time they responded to requests to knit garments for troops overseas. Images of women supporting the empire with their stitching and knitting, symbolising femininity, nurturance and guardianship of spiritual values, persisted well into the twentieth century. V.C. Clinton-Baddeley's popular pantomime *Aladdin*, first performed between the wars, but still playing in the late nineteen forties, contains the following rather incoherent lyric:

Methinks I see beside the camp fire sitting
Many an Empire Mother at her knitting.
Take heart! The bonds of friendship draw us close –
Soon we shall be one family – who knows?

The Mothers of the Empire are mothers of us all,
From humble cot or palace they hear Britannia's call.
On Baffin's icy margin or Africa's sultry shores,
They hear the call to duty and answer it by scores.

See them trooping to the Standard, hear them answer to the cry
Across our far-flung frontiers (theirs not to reason why).
The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rocks the world,
And it waves above each infant head a Union Jack unfurled.

Just as Victorian fabrications of womanhood helped construct imperial ideology, so imperialism itself contributed to the cultural production of femininity. The Girl Guide movement, founded partly as an outlet for girls whose eagerness to join Boy Scout troops both threatened the masculinist ethos of scouting and challenged contemporary notions of the feminine, was deliberately oriented towards 'a mystical ideal of empire'. But adventure and outdoor activities were firmly associated with domestic skills, as indicated by the cover of the *Girl Guides' Gazette* (founded in 1914), dominated by Britannia standing in front of a globe, revealing outlines of India and Australia, with a Girl Guide on either side, one holding a flag and saluting, while the other stands with head bowed over her knitting. In one corner of the frame is a toasting fork and grid-iron, in another a pair of scissors and thimble. Expansionist visions of empire had to be offset by images of women's confinement to the domestic sphere for which, in a centuries old tradition, textile skills had traditionally served as a marker. Andromache in the *Iliad* and Penelope in the *Odyssey* are ordered back inside the house to take up their weaving, away from public spaces where men's business is enacted. During the Renaissance,
distaff and needle served as emblems of chaste virtue in opposition to the pen, symbolising eloquence, learning and writing, which because they partook of the public world were seen to threaten women with dishonour, since the proper woman was an absence enclosed within a private household. Tennyson’s Lady of Shalott must remain imprisoned in her room weaving pictures of the world only as she sees it reflected in the mirror: gazing out the window in response to Sir Lancelot’s song, results in her death. She is punished for taking action, engaging directly with the world and initiating a sexual encounter for, on one level, the poem is a warning to women against abandoning the passivity of their socially imposed role.

The semiotics of cloth and its production have been deployed in the cause of sexual politics, just as they have in the politics of imperialism. Obvious analogies between the composition of written texts and activities of spinning and weaving mean that textiles have afforded a rich theme for literary expression, and because ‘the predominance of women in cloth production and distribution in many parts of the world is linked to the widespread symbolic systems in which cloth evokes female power’, some women writers have found cloth-making images particularly useful for defining or asserting female identity. Certain myths of origin represent all creation as spun and woven by a primordial mother goddess – the Egyptian Neith, the Greek Eilithieya or Spider Woman in Hopi Indian mythology – imaging not only the female occupation of providing clothing, but women as child-bearers clothing humanity with bodies spun and woven in the womb. Women at their looms were also figures of how past, present and future are linked together by the thread of time, woven by the Fates or Moirai – Clotho the spinner, Lachesis the measurer, and Atropos, cutter of the thread.

Although for male writers, women weaving threads of birth and death is often a menacing image, as in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, women writers have used it both to celebrate female generation, and to protest against societies which regard women primarily as breeding stock to replenish the nation. In her story ‘At the Bay’, Katherine Mansfield presents a picture of Mrs Fairfield, ‘a long piece of pink knitting in her lap’ sharing an afternoon rest with her young granddaughter, Kezia. Details of casting wool on bone needles and counting stitches punctuate the story she tells the child about her Australian Uncle William who died of sunstroke while still a young man, and the astonished Kezia discovers that ultimately she too will die. In response to her outburst, "'What if I just won’t?'", the old woman sighs and draws a long thread from the ball. "'We're not asked, Kezia," she said sadly. It happens to all of us sooner or later." Wool represents both continuity and the thread of family narrative in Mrs Fairfield’s keeping, while the pink knitting on bone needles points to her role as creator of life, since she is progenitor of several characters in the story, Kezia’s mother and aunt, Kezia herself, her
siblings and cousins. She too, however, is knitted into the warp and weft of human existence, refusing to answer her granddaughter's request that she promise never to die.

Despite her mythic resonance, Mrs Fairfield, firmly ensconced within the domestic sphere, fulfils the prescribed feminine role. But, in 'The Angel Makers' section of *Lesbian Triptych* (1980), Quebec writer, Jovette Marchessault, protesting against the colonising power of the Roman Catholic church, plays on the expression *faiseuse d'ange*, or abortionist in Quebec parlance, to create a highly subversive image of the woman knitter as goddess controlling life and death.

My mother is knitting. See how the soft yarn foams in her basket. My mother always knits with wool which was washed on the backs of the living beasts, and an entire valley is displayed in her basket when she fondles the yarns to bring them nearer her hands.37

Her knitting is red, not pink like Mrs Fairfield's, and sometimes, taking knitting needles with her - 'the thick ones and the graduated ones and the circular ones', she answers calls for help from women who seek deliverance from unwanted pregnancy. As she knits, bending over the woman's body, she carries on her back... 'Noah's Ark, the Old and the New Testaments, that ignoble inheritance, that voracious teeming of generations which has been fused from women's bellies' - and, in ironic contrast to the Christian story of the Annunciation, delivers an angel with 'no shadow, no name, no father'. As Gloria Orenstein comments: 'Abortion is envisaged as a high form of spiritual rebirth in a world where maternity leads to victimization', and the angel maker acts as a spiritual midwife assisting women in giving birth to their own new identities.38

Many postcolonial women writers use textile imagery both to represent artistic creation and to reinforce a sense of place, as in Janet Frame's novel *Living in the Maniototo* (1979), where the narrative interweaves Auckland, Stratford and various other New Zealand locations with Baltimore and Berkeley in the United States. Language is represented through the recurrent image of a golden blanket: 'All Beautiful words that people have but seldom used, the wide, rich tapestry of language that could cover the whole earth like a feasting-cloth or a golden blanket -'.39 The narrator, novelist Mavis Halleton, covets and removes a golden blanket from the house in Berkeley, California, offered by its owners, the Garretts, as a temporary refuge where she can retreat to write. This house of fiction, an artist's 'garret', while luxuriously appointed, also proves awkwardly constricting and Mavis must remove that rich tapestry of language, the blanket, because, although it may have been woven in the house of art, it also belongs to the world beyond, prompting memories of the blankets in her New Zealand childhood and their association with specific places.
Their brand names were marked in the corners. Some were English – *Wilton* – a name I had heard spoken with the reverence obviously due to it; others, with names that caused a shiver of homesickness, a memory of school days when places became their products – Onehunga, Mosgiel, Kaiapoi: the places with the woolen mills and therefore the blankets. (228)

Periphery and centre interweave, while art, represented here by the craft of weaving, is expressed through the mundane responsibilities of housekeeping:

I remember my mother looking out at the fluffy-clouded sky with its patches of pale blue, saying, 'It's blanket weather.' That meant washing. The washing was a remembered ritual and risk. The women's magazines printed regularly long serious articles with such titles as 'Dare I Wash My Woolen Blankets?' and 'The Risk of Washing Woolen Blankets,' sometimes pages of 'Hints on Washing Woolen Blankets.' Blankets in their washing and drying were part of the poetry of the outside world and its weather. (228-9)

Language, woven by the artist, can link past with present, uniting the world of everyday experience with that of the imagination, producing warmth and comfort for all who wish to avail themselves of it.

In *Tirra Lirra By the River* (1978), the Australian novelist, Jessica Anderson, considers the role of the woman artist, establishing strong associations between place, particularly a woman's place, and textile art. The ageing Nora Porteous reviews her life on returning to the family home in Brisbane in the 1970s after many years of absence, first as a married woman in Sydney and then as an expatriate living in London. Her situation as artist is represented within the historical context of life in early twentieth century Australia and the limits it imposed on female creativity and sensual expression. And, just as Janet Frame interweaves New Zealand and United States locations to demonstrate contrasts between the two countries and to show the power of American hegemony even in a place as remote from the 'centre' as New Zealand, so Anderson moves her heroine between Australia and England to explore the situation of the expatriate artist and the effects of British cultural imperialism. Although Nora's decision to travel overseas is taken on impulse rather than from any conscious desire to seek the centre, her sense of provinciality is a colonialist construct which she sheds completely only in old age.

Nora is linked with Tennyson's lady of Shalott through the novel's title, by her own fascination with the poem and her yearning for fulfilment, symbolised for her by the image of Camelot, 'a region of my mind, where infinite expansion was possible,' and by her work with textiles. As a girl she embroiders, and, for much of her adult life, supports herself by dressmaking. When young, she has only a rudimentary sense of artistic
vocation, and her later career as dressmaker offers little artistic scope, although she is eventually employed at a London theatrical costumier's:

I became chief dressmaker, and worked with many designers. A few were brilliant, and I often had the pleasure of seeing one of these alter his designs at my suggestion, a pleasure denied to him, since it was a natural part of his great talent that he absorbed suggestion and regarded the result as wholly his own. (111)

The irony underlines how Nora's personal and artistic development is impeded by the social roles imposed on women and an accompanying lack of economic independence. As empires absorb colonised countries into maps fabricated by the colonizer, so patriarchy absorbs colonised subjects into the fabric of its own weaving.

One of the many truths about herself Nora must confront in old age is her achievement as an artist, marked by three wall-hangings she embroidered as a young girl - revelations to her as much as to the reader, since she has long forgotten them. But a lifetime's experience now enables her to evaluate their quality. The first shows a stylised orange tree beneath which strut and peck 'eight little birds, all fabulous yet touchingly domestic' (58). Tree and bird are important both as separate and conjoined images within the novel. For Nora, birds are linked with freedom, and golden fruit with sensual joy, and the conjunction of bird and fruiting tree also indicates the life of art in the novel. The second embroidery shows 'a swag of jacaranda leaves with the head and breast of a big magpie thrusting through' (101). Nora judges it artistically inferior, good in conception, but muddled in execution. It is possible that the magpie, noted for its imitative skill, represents an artistic direction - faithful imitation of conventionally beautiful subjects like the jacaranda - which the youthful Nora had not recognized as a blind alley. But, seeing the third embroidery, of swirling suns, moons and stars, she is forced, grudgingly, to concede its excellence. Here, bird and tree motifs are combined and transcended. The sky is associated with the flight of freedom and the heavenly bodies with the golden fruit of sensuality, especially after Nora's earlier descriptions of being enthralled by the brilliant intensity of the tropical night sky (19), and how as a young girl she lay on the grass baring her breasts to the moon: 'I don't believe I was looking for a lover. Or not only for a lover. I believe I was also trying to match that region of mind, Camelot' (11).

Initially, the ageing Nora is resentful to discover how good her youthful embroideries are, for, at first, they seem to represent unfulfilled artistic promise. But, in terms of the novel, Nora's life is represented as an almost completed work of art, with its years of 'vile wastage' an integral part of artistic achievement. The embroideries, never taken very seriously by those around her, mark out a territory of rich creativity, and Camelot, which she had hoped to reach by departing from her origins, is waiting
for her in her own back yard. The subjects of the embroideries are not, at first sight, characteristically Australian, but the text suggests that, for Nora, they are strongly associated with her place of origin. There are many references to jacarandas flowering in Brisbane, and, when she first contemplates a return to Australia, it is because 'I don't want to live in a climate where they can't grow oranges' (88). The novel also associates the brilliance of the night sky with Brisbane's tropical climate and, on looking at her embroidery of it, Nora is also jolted into the recognition that she might have found her vocation as an artist had she spent her life in Brisbane:

But this shows I had begun to do something here after all. I have never done anything of this quality since. Who knows what else I may have drawn...
I stop myself in time. The words in my mind were 'drawn out of the compression of a secret life.' (128)

Both Jessica Anderson and Janet Frame take the textile crafts which have been dismissively relegated to the woman's sphere to be practised in domestic seclusion and use them to signify the creative achievements of art as they explore the space of women's exclusion.

Cloth and its production have contributed materially and symbolically to the fabrication of empires. A vital trade commodity, textiles are also potent signifiers of national dominance and the interweaving of one territory into another. Both literally and metaphorically, they have offered a means by which existing power structures may be subverted and new identities established. Moreover, because so many societies have gendered cloth production as female, it has marked, again literally and symbolically, the implication of women colonists in the imperialist process, together with the efforts numbers of women have made both to subvert hegemonic power structures which marginalise them and to create new identities of their own.

NOTES

2. The desire to maintain a semblance of respectability indicated by the harlequin's justification that his original clothing was so tattered, 'I wasn't decent' (227), together with the meticulousness of his mending, also invites comparison with the white accountant Marlow meets near the start of his journey, who is so elegantly turned out he appears a similarly fantastical figure, 'a sort of vision', a miracle. 'I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clear necktie, and varnished boots'. This immaculate appearance which signifies his status as both European and bourgeois is gained through exploiting an African woman whom he has compelled to do his laundry. 'It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work.'
12. Ibid, p.368
14. Weiner and Schneider, *op. cit.*, p.18
16. Ibid, p.400
17. Ibid, p.403
25. Ibid, p.182
28. Bratton *op.cit.*, p.206
29. Ibid, p.195 and pp.207-8
32. Tennyson, *op.cit.*, pp.354-361
34. Weiner and Schneider, *op.cit.*, p.21
38. Gloria Feman Orenstein, ‘Postface’ in Jovette Marchessault, *op.cit.*, pp. 89-95
41. I am indebted to my colleague Dr Joseph Pugliese for this suggestion.
I was new. I was black in a white school in a white country. The only black. Unique. I was filled with Enid-Blyton-boarding-school-expectations. Life would be dorm feasts at midnight. I would save the school hockey team from ruin at a choice moment. I would win the deportment badge and I would, I would....

It was Miss Twist, the house mistress.
‘Candace, isn’t it? This is your head of house, and here is someone to show you the ropes. I’m sure you’ll enjoy being a member of St. Hilda’s house. We’ve won the lacrosse cup three times in a row, and well, I expect you’ll find out everything soon enough. I always admire you people. Such lovely skin and such white teeth. Like dusky queens from Africa I always think.’
‘Actually I’m from Guyana.’
‘Excellent, excellent. I don’t think I’ve heard of that part of Africa before.’
‘Well, actually, Guyana is in South America.’
‘Excellent dear. I’ll hand you over to Lillian who’ll tell you all you need to know.’
She busied out of the hall.
‘Spect you’re a bit nervous,’ Lillian said. ‘Don’t be. Twist’s an idiot, and wait till you see the other house mistress Gramley. She’s a real cow.’
She chattered on.
Gramley’s a case for the crown. God, some people’s faces...She’s really clever though. Well, on occasions. Apparently when she was in her teens she did all her ‘A’ levels in the French language just for the hell of it.
I made appropriate noises.
‘Oh, don’t be taken in by that,’ continued Lillian.
‘She failed all of them. Not such a bad sort though, on the whole.’
Lillian became briskly efficient. ‘I see you haven’t got all of our uniform yet. The shops which are supposed to supply them are always short of one thing or another. Not to worry.’
It was true, but with the exception of my hat, I’d managed to obtain most of the alarming amount of clothing required both for summer and winter. There were suits and gloves and indoor shoes and outdoor shoes and wellies and plimsolls and hockey boots; my raincoat, my cape, my afternoon dresses, regulation panties, regulation swimsuit and so on. I had
become one of the uniformed hordes of boarding schools and I was thrilled by the idea of it all.

First of all Lillian took me for my medical. Blacks are usually healthy except when they’re not, the doctor opined, and I belonged to the former category. I was able to skip the urine test as a result of this observation. He thought I wouldn’t need to see a dentist either, on account of the strong white teeth of the Negro.

Lillian commented. ‘I say, you’re getting through all of this routine pretty quickly.’

Next came the bug combing. To check for lice. There was already a long queue of girls waiting patiently for their hair to be combed through. Matron fatly sat on a chair and combed the hair of girl after girl. After each combing she’d dip the comb in a bowl of warm water and then go on to the next girl. Blondes, brunettes, redheads, the mousy-haired, walked silently on, like convicts being deloused.

My Afro hair turn came. Matron blanched. The comb quivered with indecision.

‘Well, dear, I’m sure there’s no need for you to undergo this. Lovely hair. I can see you don’t have any lice. Next girl please.’

‘Lillian was awestruck. I bore a charmed life, it seemed.

As the term wore on, I fell into the swing of things. Classes came and went. The worst was Latin. The language is too logical, it has no passion. It’s boring. ‘No wonder it’s dead,’ was my whispered comment to Lillian, who had remained my staunch guide and companion in boarding-school land. But the Latin mistress had seen me whispering. She closed her eyes for a moment. Then she pounced. I had to read the speech:

_Quae insaniam vos habet? Videtis dolum non donum Graecorum...Quid ignorat Ulixem? Aut Graeco in hoc ligneo latent..._

Or something stupid like that about the Greeks bearing false gifts. You know. That story about the horse being shoved into old Troy as a gift from the Greeks. But it was a wooden horse and inside were soldiers. Really stupid story. The Trojans must have been thick. I mean who’d give their best friend a wooden horse as a gift, let alone their enemy?

Oh, she was crafty. The Latin mistress was irritated by my rendering of the sacred lines. She’d get me yet. I could see her thinking up something horrible for me for daring to speak during her lesson.

She re-opened the text-book and turned several pages. She again called on me to turn to page two hundred and eight, and, oh boy, talk about the Greeks bearing gifts.

I had to decline the word ‘niger’ meaning black. _Niger, nigris...Oh what the hell!! So many variations of black. I could feel my black skin sweating. And it wasn’t even summer. Each syllable sounding like a fist in my face. I finished the recitation and Calibanned out of the room._
'Come back here this minute, Candace Caine.'
'No, I will not. You did it on purpose.'
The sobs welled, but I would not, could not, must not, will not cry.
'Listen Madam, I’m proud to be black. And I resent what you’re trying
to do. And, in any case, your lesson is unspeakably boring and dull, and
I hate Latin, besides, and I hate this God-damned white country, and who
do you think you are anyway?'

Did Caliban sound dignified when he gave Miranda and Prospero what
for? I was the instant heroine of the Latin hour.
'Oh, jolly good!'
'Well done, Candace!'‘
'You really told her off proper.'
'She’s a cow. And Latin is the most boring subject on earth.'

I received the praise like one of those dusky queens from Africa. I had
earned it. Two hours later, as I put my coat and outdoor shoes on to go
to the chapel, my black heart pounded and bounced about within me like
a bony skull, dangling from a spinal column. I thought it would break.
Strange that the deadness of a language could so quicken the emotions.
Perhaps the language wasn’t so dead after all.

We made a crocodile, winding our way through the village to the chapel.
Lillian was my partner. Everyone was in uniform of course, and we
looked rather smart in our togs, I must say. I was sorry I hadn’t gotten my
hat though like the others. But the shop had promised to send it to me by
the following Tuesday. We reached the zebra crossing and waited for the
traffic to stop. Lillian, of all people, took the opportunity to crack a racial
joke:
‘There was this wog see, who was walking over a zebra crossing
muttering something under his breath. Guess what it was?’
In spite of myself I was curious.
‘Well, what?’
‘He was saying...now you see me...now you don’t...’
I stared at her hard, attempting what they call in books, a ‘steely glance’.
But the joke passed through the croc and all the uniforms were soon
giggling and rippling down the line.

A villager, a mother and her toddler, had also stopped at the same time
as us. There was no mistake about it. They were staring at me. I stared
back. The mother, embarrassed, tried to draw the little girl’s attention
away from me. The single dark spot on the crocodile.
‘Elspeth, darling,’ she crooned, ‘have a biscuit.’
Elspeth was no glutton. She persisted in her staring.
‘Mummy look. Look at that girl.’ Mummy was frantic now, attempted
to hold Elspeth away from me. Elspeth began stomping her tiny feet in a
passion. ‘Mummy, mummy, look at that girl.’

Mummy at last had to give in. Mother and daughter looked at me. Then
the little girl with the tiniest finger in the world pointed and shouted with
the same conviction as that Greek chap who was in the bath tub and discovered volume or something and shouted 'Eureka!' or even with the sort of horrified fascination those stupid Trojans must have felt when they saw the Greeks popping out of the wooden horse.

'Look mummy!' she said pointing at me, 'She hasn't got a hat.'
Heart of Darkness Revisited: The African Response

The standing of Joseph Conrad as a major novelist of his time has been for a long time unassailable. F.R. Leavis certainly regards Conrad as rightfully belonging to 'The Great Tradition' of English literature - minor misgivings notwithstanding. It is argued that he is one of those artists who have extended the frontiers of the novel and created more space and more possibilities for the exploration and depiction of human experience. This view is confirmed by David Daiches who in his book The Novel and the Modern World acknowledges the technical possibilities heralded by Conrad's multiple points of view in the art of story-telling. Albert Guerard's assessment of Conrad's work is in the same vein but at times uncomfortably specific. He regards Heart of Darkness as being 'among the half-dozen greatest short novels in the English language' (Guerard, 1978:9). This commendation is in fact far from being an eccentric one uttered by an over-enthusiastic critic. F.R. Leavis, who is generally a rigorous and censorious critic, writes 'Heart of Darkness is, by common consent, one of Conrad's best things' (Leavis, 1973:174).

On the other hand, the African response to some of Conrad's work has been at best mixed and at other times openly hostile. Here is how one of the most influential novelists and critic-cum-thinkers describes his reaction to Conrad:

In the works of Joseph Conrad, which I studied as a special paper, I had seen how the author had used a variety of narrative voices at different times and places in the same novel with tantalising effect. With Conrad the same event could be looked at by the same person at different times and places; and each of these multiple voices could shed new light on the event by supplying more information, more evidence, or by relating other episodes that preceded or followed the event under spotlight. Nostromo was my favourite ... but on the whole I found Conrad's vision limited. (Thiongo, 1987:76)

Ngugi wa' Thiongo is, like David Daiches, fascinated by the way in which Conrad handles the technical aspects of creative writing but somewhat critical of his vision. Similarly, that doyen of the African novel in English, Chinua Achebe, admits that Conrad is 'a great stylist of modern fiction' and a good story-teller (Achebe, 1988:2) - in a sense a
writer who has produced a serious and therefore permanent literature. But Achebe's positive comment is qualified in the same essay by a vigorous and relentless attack on *Heart of Darkness* in particular. It is a novel, he argues with passion, which 'eliminates the African as human factor and parades in the most vulgar fashion, prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies...' (Achebe, 1988:10).

Indeed Achebe's indignant comments echo those of another African scholar Michael Echeruo. In a critical work specifically devoted to Joyce Cary's fiction, Echeruo digresses momentarily to make a disdainful swipe at *Heart of Darkness*. He writes: 'Heart of Darkness, ultimately, reveals the mind of an imperial Europe at its day's end: it reveals nothing about the character of Africa itself' (Echeruo, 1973:5).

Why, the reader may ask, is the African reader vehemently critical of *Heart of Darkness*? The text seems to elicit an unusual degree of criticism especially from highly influential voices from the African continent. Is it a failure, on the part of the African reader and writer, to appreciate the subtleties of an acclaimed European masterpiece or is it that African readers are victims of a prejudiced and wilful misreading of the novel? This article is an attempt to account for the African reaction to the novel in the process of underlining the following:

i) The fact that in *Heart of Darkness* Conrad sets out to question the nature of man in a specific historical context characterized by imperialism.

ii) That what starts off as a subversion of the ideals of imperialistic discourse is in tum subverted by an artistic process which becomes too dependent on stereotypes of the time, especially when Marlow starts sailing up the Congo River.

iii) That these stereotypes are part of a long standing tradition which has been harmful to blacks for centuries.

It is helpful to recall that Conrad writes *Heart of Darkness* barely thirteen years after the Berlin conference of 1884 has officially sanctioned the partition of Africa into specific spheres belonging to various European powers. These powers did not bother at all to consult the inhabitants of the African continent; neither were they concerned about the ethical basis of their momentous decision. Had famous missionaries such as David Livingstone and well known travellers like Henry Horton Stanley not made it obvious that Africa was a vast continent waiting to be blessed with the virtues of the Christian gospel as well as the benefits of western trade and commerce? Apart from the writings of David Livingstone and others, Europe had an opportunity to whet its curiosity with the writings of Stanley whose books had obliging titles such as *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *Darkest Africa* (1890). Soon Europe assumed an Adamic role which entailed banishing the darkness of Africa, giving new names to its features and people and taming the African wilderness into
a garden bereft of the proverbial biblical snake. Often the rhetoric of imperialism as well as that of the Christian gospel became indistinguishable, and so messianic as to gloss over the economic interests of those involved. Alongside this historical phenomenon there developed in Europe a literature which, consciously or unconsciously, was aimed at justifying the whole process of colonisation and Empire building as a noble undertaking.

Writing about the nature and function of popular literature in Britain at the turn of the last century, David Daniell has this to say in his essay titled ‘Buchan and “The Black General”’:

It becomes aggressively, and defensively imperialistic. It leaves the Christian family ambience and becomes all male and public school: military values invade and take over stories; white dominates black with cool superiority of a god - now in the name of something called civilisation... Between 1880 and 1900 a hundred children’s journals were founded, over half of them devoted to ‘manly’ adventure for boys - privileged boys at public school, preparing to be officers in the armed forces. (Dabydeen (ed) 1985:141)

Indeed, the narrator in Rider Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines (1885) claims that his narrative is an adventure story for his mischievous son at home. It is a story in which the aristocratic values of Europe represented by Sir Henry Curtis and those of the military represented by Captain Good triumph over the values of a superstitious and gullible African people. Africa becomes a playground for Europeans keen to exhibit their manhood and superiority in the face of a challenging environment. Similarly in John Buchan’s Prester John (1910) we witness how David Crawford together with his fellow whites subdue a legendary African general, Laputa, thus all the more vindicating the superiority of whites over blacks. Both King Solomon’s Mines and Prester John are adventure stories shamelessly Eurocentric and racist. In the penultimate chapter of Prester John Crawford defines the white man’s burden in Africa as follows:

I knew then the meaning of the white man’s duty. He has to take all risks, reckoning nothing of his life or his fortunes, and well content to find his reward in the fulfilment of his task. That is the difference between white and black, the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a King, and so long as we know this and practise it, we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies. (Buchan, 1910:230)

Considering the fact that Prester John and King Solomon’s Mines have been, over time, accorded the status of minor classics, and made into films, it can be argued that they typify the kind of popular fiction which touched the hearts and excited the imagination of many European citizens who would have been condemned to a routine and rather drab existence. Such a literature becomes a vicarious rite of passage for those entering
into their phase of manhood. More importantly, however, such books spurred many into embracing the cause of imperialism in Africa and other parts of the world.

The publication of *Heart of Darkness* in 1902 can be seen as an integral part of the development of that literature spawned by the European expansion into other parts of the world. In fact there is a way in which *Heart of Darkness* has elements of an Edwardian adventure story. Marlow himself is driven into Africa by his desire to fulfil a childhood dream about the Congo. By the time he returns he is an entirely different man - he has grown up! Kurtz himself sets out for Africa as an archetypal figure representing those departments of civilisation in which Europe is perceived as having taken a lead over the dark peoples of the world. Rumour has it that Kurtz is a musician, an orator, a poet-cum-painter, an agent of science and progress and a trading official into the bargain. According to fragmentary bits of information which reach Marlow, Kurtz has the talent and the will-power, in fact everything which Europe could give to such a man of destiny. As such Kurtz becomes the embodiment of those ideals which imperialism often proclaimed as part of its Crusade to civilize savage continents. For Kurtz, Africa is part of a challenging frontier to be tamed and controlled.

What almost rescues *Heart of Darkness* from becoming a political romance in the Rider Haggard school of imperialist propaganda is the inherently sceptical and ruthlessly questioning stance assumed by Marlow right from the beginning of his journey to Africa. In addition there is an attempt by Conrad to distance himself from Marlow through a careful narrative strategy. Unlike the unreturned Kurtz of the earlier journey, Marlow is disdainful and scathing in his attitude towards these very ideals cherished by the European public. He is taken aback upon discovering that his brainwashed aunt regards him as:

> Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about ‘weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,’ till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the company was run for profit. (Conrad, 1989:39)

It can be argued here that Marlow as an artistic creation enjoys the insight of Conrad, the writer who visited the Congo in 1890, and had an opportunity to see for himself Leopold II's Congo Free State. It must have become obvious to Conrad that there was a gap between the discourse of imperialism with all its clichés and idealistic sentiments and the actual sordid business of exploiting Africa. Also there is the biographical fact that Conrad himself grew up in a part of Poland dominated by Russia and, as such, he did not find it easy to share the European euphoria about empire
- more so when his numerous journeys to what John McClure calls 'the raw edges of the empire' (Dabydeen (ed) 1985:154) had enabled him to see the whole business of empire from a slightly different angle.

A passage which reveals more clearly the attitude of Marlow, and perhaps that of Conrad himself, towards imperialism is the one often cited by critics. Marlow stumbles upon dying blacks in Africa and says:

They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now, - nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient and were allowed to crawl away and rest. (Conrad, 1989:44)

Being confirmed by Marlow at this instance is the fact that whites in Africa are not pilgrims of progress as is claimed by the protagonists of King Solomon's Mines. Often they are actors in a barbaric and destructive drama which inflicts untold havoc on the very inhabitants of a continent which the rhetoric of imperialism claims to redeem. Far from being 'pilgrims', 'apostles' and 'emissaries of light', they are, ironically, a callous and vicious lot propelled by base motives of selfishness and greed. In other words, the supposedly heroic deeds celebrated in the boy's adventure story are revealed as fraudulent, often with consequences horrifying to look at. Marlow's comments at this stage are a direct indictment of imperialism: the blacks become the proverbial victims they have always been in history, trampled upon by the wheels of empire.

What seems to have interested and fascinated Conrad, however, is not so much the fate of the non-white as a victim of imperialism but rather, what became of the character and fate of the so-called superior race the moment it left the shores of a supposedly 'civilised' western world and came up face to face with the dark people of an alien culture and environment. In the stock drama churned out by the Haggards and Buchans of the pro-imperialist world, that point of contact and conflict with other races becomes an opportunity to vindicate white supremacy. As for Conrad, that moment is fraught with perilous contradictions and disabling anxieties. For instance, the moment Kurtz reaches the interior of Africa, he becomes a ruthless ivory collecting brute. His passion for ivory becomes a demonic obsession which knows no moral boundaries. He raids the locals with the supreme confidence of a god. Far from spreading the seeds of European civilisation in a supposedly dark and malevolent wilderness, Kurtz becomes a sinister figure - indeed an integral part of the very darkness he is meant to banish from Africa. The messianic zeal and idealism often displayed in the boy's adventure story and which we initially identify with Kurtz, is brutally undercut. That impressive and more or less romantic public profile which Kurtz enjoys in Europe and before those who know him from a distance is pitilessly undermined by
what Marlow discovers about him in Africa. He becomes a sinister and
resounding mockery of those ideals which man has always parroted, often
as an unwitting justification of his own latent and selfish needs.

The implication of the degeneration which takes place in Kurtz is that
the moment he leaves Europe with its restraining order and civilizing
influences he becomes overwhelmed by the forces of darkness which have
always lurked beneath European civilisation itself right from those
centuries predating Roman influence in Britain. His convictions and ideals
dwindle into embarrassing sentiments rudely cast aside by the beast in
him. One can even claim that by hinting at the darkness which Europe
still harbours in its breast and which the nineteenth and early twentieth
century European reader was readily prone to see in the otherness of
non-whites, Conrad is deliberately assaulting the all too often simplistic
moral inanities of imperialistic discourse with its insistence on the crude
dichotomies between darkness and light, black and white, savage and
civilized. This is more evident in that even Europe is associated with
metaphors suggesting incipient darkness and death. In *Heart of Darkness*,
the manichean mode of perception and expression becomes destabilized
as conventional symbolic language becomes invested with uncustomary
associations. The colour of ivory and the sinister resonance it acquires in
this novel is a good example here.

If it is accepted that the symbolic role of Kurtz is to question and
subvert European modes of perception and thinking, the question that
arises pertains to the consistency and effectiveness with which this is done
in *Heart of Darkness*. Put in another way, to what extent does *Heart of
Darkness* succeed in undercutting and displacing the popular ideas and
prejudices of its Edwardian readership? Does this novel succeed in
creating enough space for new thinking to take root, for new attitudes and
feelings to emerge? To address these questions, we have to examine the
mode in which the spiritual disintegration of Kurtz is described. Marlow
continues:

The wilderness had patted him on the head and behold, it was like a ball, an ivory
ball; it had caressed him, and lo!, he had withered; it had taken him, and got into
his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable
ceremonies of some devilish initiation... (Conrad, 1989:84)

In order for Conrad to describe the intangible but real world of the spirit
associated with the moral decay of Kurtz, he transforms Africa into an
active, symbolic persona possessing those anarchic Dionysian energies
which are forever locked in combat against the Appolonian principles
underpinning western civilization. Africa and its ivory become an
objective correlative acting out the role of a demonic Vampire which is
pitiless in its hold over the seduced and hapless Kurtz.
One way of regarding the role which Conrad assigns to Africa is to take the continent as merely an appropriate setting on which to dramatize the moral dissolution of Kurtz - it is an environment whose supposed wilderness is meant to perform a small task - that is, elicit the darkness deeply buried within the heart of the protagonist himself. On the other hand, African readers are painfully conscious of the wicked archetypal role often assigned to the so-called frontier societies which are non-white. Here is how Richard Slotkin describes the stereotypical role of the Red Indian in the psyche of North American whites:

They are our ecological link with our biota - the organic environment which we strive to repudiate and destroy...the flooding tide full of turmoil and whirlpools of the unconscious; or id, or the dark forces of the blood...the actual savage environment that reason and order and human relationships can penetrate but cannot control. (Slotkin, 1973:18)

In a sense Africa and its inhabitants are reduced into a threatening symbol which, like the symbolic role of the Red Indians, harbours an anarchic potential which the civilized world has striven to ‘repudiate and destroy’. It appears as if critics such as Frederick R. Karl, Albert Guerard, F.R. Leavis and others have been quite content to regard the symbolic role assigned to the Congo as appropriate in expressing the darker and more menacing side of European culture. Such an artistic process appears to them as a helpful and indeed a legitimate free play of the imagination which singles out Conrad as a genius. However, most of those African readers who have been on the receiving end of imperialism find such a symbolic role unfortunate in the extreme. If we take into account the politics and attitudes of Conrad’s readers at the turn of the last century, readers whose imagination was steeped in theories of racial superiority of whites over blacks, the symbolic darkness of Africa and its supposed barbarism and savagery are the very stuff which the empire builder and the purveyor of popular imperialist literature needed most. Conrad’s desire to underline the existence of what John McClure calls a ‘radical moral and epistemological darkness’ (Dabydeen (ed) 1985:162) in terms inherently African and black is counterproductive in that it confirms pernicious myths which were cherished by missionaries, explorers and empire builders who sought to establish a European presence in Africa in one form or other. Far from subverting the simplistic moral categories of imperialistic discourse Marlow’s perception of Africa confirms the worst about Africa.

Conrad himself seems to have been aware of the over-dramatization of evil and sought to justify it in the following terms:

Heart of Darkness is experience, too; but experience pushed a little, (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers. Its theme ‘had to be
By implying that his fictional process is ultimately rooted in the actual experience of his visit to the Congo in 1890, Conrad is in fact insisting that his narrative be seen as a credible version of the white experience in the Congo. One cannot quarrel about his assessment of the calibre of those fortune seekers who flocked to the Congo during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Marlow is right in exposing the crassness and moral vacancy of those who descended upon Africa like vultures. The history of Leopold II in his Congo Free State is testimony enough. However, it is when Conrad tries to create what he calls 'a sinister resonance' that he lapses into a controversial process of myth-making which denies blacks a recognisable humanity. In a letter to Elsa Martindale alias Mrs Ford Madox Ford Conrad confessed: 'What I distinctly admit is the fault of having made Kurtz too symbolic or rather symbolic at all. But the story being mainly a vehicle for conveying a batch of personal impressions I gave free rein to my mental laziness and took the line of least resistance...' (Karl, 1975:28) Frederick R. Karl regards the somewhat self-effacing comments by Conrad as referring to the 'tardiness of Kurtz's vitality?' One can actually argue here that the line of least resistance entailed a reliance on ready-made images and stereotypes about Africa which ultimately overshadow the anti-imperialistic thesis implicit in Marlow's original stance. The symbolic and pre-historical Africa of his novel naturally demands a protagonist who operates at a symbolic level, too.

Thus the Congo which Conrad visited is skilfully transformed into a primeval terrain which Marlow claims to be 'the beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were Kings.' (Conrad, 1989:66) It is a pre-historic Africa peopled by cannibals with filed teeth addicted to superstition and weird ceremonies of the devil. Unlike Marlow, the 'pilgrims' and the Russian who converse in a respectable and recognisable language, the African is reduced to an almost pre-verbal creature whose dialect is a hotch-potch of 'screeches', 'howls', 'babbles of uncouth sounds' and 'grunting phrases': sometimes the blacks merge with the environment as part of the flora and fauna; at other times they become part of a weird and sinister mood - a menacing presence. The evocation of this sinister world is so vivid and so new as to transport the reader into a nightmarish world inhabited by alien species but bearing the shape of humans. It is riveting poetic conjuration of sinister images intimating the outlines of a world inhabited by a lunatic breed of primeval blacks and a few stray whites. The sensational character of this world with its shifting moods and elusive certainties has dazzled western readers no end. But for the black reader that bewitching success of Conrad places his identity beyond the pale of human civilization - that is, in the minds of people...
whose societies have not hesitated in the past to wield excessive power over the African’s fate in an unfair way.

Even Marlow, whose point of view is central in the novel, and who seems to be morally awake and conscious of the moral travesties which abound cannot help but betray his own prejudice against blacks. Those who assist the white buccaneers are regarded by Marlow as, ‘reclaimed’, or ‘improved specimen’ or ‘poor devils’. Marlow, who alone could provide that yardstick by which readers can judge those around him, makes it clear that he prefers the ‘black cannibals’ rather than the ‘improved specimen’ who, according to his prejudice, are often guilty of forgetting their natural position in the scheme of things. He describes the black fireman as follows: ‘to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs’ (Conrad, 1989:70). Such a description speaks volumes about his antipathy towards blacks. In fact instead of being seen as part of the human family, the black man is projected as being much nearer the animal world.

When Conrad deliberately opts for a version of Africa based on myths and prejudices of his age rather than one based on his experiences in the Congo of the 1890s, he is in fact pandering to the predilections of a readership whose imagination and sensibility have been for a long time indisposed towards anything black and anyone non-white. The stereotypical roles of Aaron in Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus (1590) and the daughters of Niger in Ben Jonson’s Masque of Blackness (1605) come to mind here. More disturbing is that antipathy towards non-whites was rooted in a theology of an earlier era and the pseudo-science of the Victorian period. Brian Street writes:

The central ordering device for a long time prior to the nineteenth century Britain was the concept of ‘a chain of being’, whereby nature was taken to be a unified whole, ranked in a hierarchy from angels to insects. In the nineteenth century this essentially theological notion was adapted to scientific descriptions of nature and refined by Darwinian theories of evolution. The application of evolutionary theory to the ladder meant that researchers could expect to find examples of earlier stages of their developments by examining living contemporary societies. The comparative method enabled travellers and scientists alike to examine living creatures and fellow men for evidence of their own past. (Dabydeen (ed), 1985:97)

Thus when Marlow describes the black assistants on the boat as belonging to ‘beginnings of time’ he is in fact invoking as well as eliciting the concurrence of a seemingly valid evolutionary paradigm which underpins what Michael Echeruo has dubbed the ‘conditioned imagination’. In such a paradigm, those who hail from the ‘dark’ continent occupy a position perilously close to the bestial world, which Europe has long since left behind. By regarding blacks as primitive primates Marlow is in fact suggesting the incalculable and normally unbridgeable gulf separating Europe from the dark primitive Africa. The latter becomes an
indispensable existential condition of absurdity against which we can measure the monumental distance which Kurtz has had to cover during his fall from the topmost rung of the ladder of civilization. His fall becomes complete the moment he embraces the moral abyss conceived as being inherently a Congolese phenomenon.

Of primary significance is the way darkness is described as being epistemologically African, a phenomenon whose perils may catch up with the unwary European of the likes of Kurtz. The fact that Kurtz is engulfed by darkness does not necessarily mean that darkness has become an oppressive part of Europe: the darkness remains a potent threat rather than the overwhelming nightmare that it is in the Africa of Conrad’s narrative. As such the image of darkness remains an African burden and Kurtz is simply part of an ominous cautionary tale which Europe has to heed if it is to keep the ever-threatening terrors of the wilderness at bay. Put in another way, the process of identifying Europe with darkness is done in a teasingly tentative manner as to be weaker than the process of imbuing Africa with a menacing darkness. At this level Kurtz’s darkness together with that of the lesser ‘pilgrims’ is exceptional while that of the blacks is typical. In a sense Marlow’s narrative is banking on the concurrence of the popular imagination of the period which dismissed black cultures in distant lands as backward. What Conrad does is to succumb to the habitual myth-making process which automatically identifies the outward colour of the black man with the worst of moral associations. In The Nigger of the Narcissus for instance, Conrad is eager to go for the blackness he sees in Jimmy Wait and to make him a menacing symbol whose diseased and disabling enigmatic presence becomes the yardstick by which we can assess the moral health or lack of it of the whole crew.

It is quite tempting to those who have enjoyed reading Heart of Darkness in the past to point out that it is no use for the African reader to get worked up ninety years after the book was published: after all the Africa of Heart of Darkness is a mythical one and, as such, illuminates very little about the realities of Africa of the 1890s. The only problem here is that in the history of black people myth and reality have often collided very much to the detriment of the children of Africa. For instance a well known powerful gentleman of culture, Lord Chesterfield, argued in a letter to a son of his who was probably troubled about the morality of the slave trade: ‘blacks are little better than lions, tigers, leopards, and other wild beasts which that country produces in great numbers.’ He went on to argue that blacks had no arts, sciences and systems of commerce and, as such, it was acceptable ‘to buy a great many of them to sell again to advantage in the West Indies’ (Dabydeen, 1985:29). In other words Conrad is peddling myths about blacks which have been manipulated in the past by those who sought to exploit them for material gain.
An interesting stereotype which some critics have positively commented upon at the expense of the rather lifeless presence of Kurtz's Intended is centred on the savage African woman. She is a personification of the whole continent and is described as follows:

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed clothes, treading the earth proudly with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments; she had brass leggings to the knees, brass wire, gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glassbeads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witchmen, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its tenebrous and passionate soul. (Conrad, 1989:101)

Here the African woman symbolizes a barbaric magnificence: she is majestically alluring yet with a gaudiness which is gratuitously repellent; she is the ivory which beckons fortune seekers but only to destroy the morally unwary. Her vitality is as seductive as it is sinfully corrosive: it is part of that sexuality hinted at by the words 'passion', 'mysterious' and 'fecundity' but a sexuality which is demonic and therefore morally dangerous. Later in the narrative Kurtz is said to have been part of unspeakable sexual deeds of a lurid and debauched nature. As F.R. Karl claims, her 'demanding display of sex' is provocatively tempting but fatal to the likes of Kurtz lacking in restraint. She is the darkness which awakens the primeval instincts in Kurtz and as such, part of the black peril which casts a dark menacing shadow across the width and breadth of the whole land. In a way she becomes an African version of the legendary femme fatale, the proverbial temptress of the African wilderness.

According to the metaphysical language of the narrative, the fall of Kurtz is a moral crime caused by his singular lack of restraint. Unlike Captain Good who rejects the gentle but equally tempting black beauty, Foulata of *King Solomon's Mines*, Kurtz goes native the moment he embraces the savage African woman and indulges in sexual orgies of an inexpressible and abominable kind. In falling from grace he dramatizes the extent to which imagination, vitality and resolute will-power and restraint - all qualities identified with the construction of a European civilization and with Kurtz - can easily be destroyed by those primeval instincts which have always hounded man. These instincts can express themselves through an unbridled lust for sex, unrestrained greed for wealth and a passion for a godlike power over other fellow creatures.

Given a chance to choose between the rather pale and lifeless Intended and the savage African mistress, the reasoning part in Kurtz would opt for
the former: but of course the anarchic beast in him opts for the seductive but vengeful African mistress and in doing so he loses his soul in the Faustian manner. Incidentally, even the language of the story becomes very scriptural at this point. In other words, in spite of the assiduously cultivated sense of mystery and vagueness which F.R. Leavis describes correctly as being achieved through an ‘adjectival insistence’, one senses the crude outline of a morality play of the medieval period embedded in the novella, but of course rendered in the cynical idiom of a theologically more uncertain nineteenth and twentieth century environment. The African mistress embodies those regressive primeval instincts which, in the story, overwhelm the idealism of the ambitious Kurtz. Evil, this time, triumphs over the good.

It can be argued that as an artist Conrad is entirely free to offer us a mythical version of Africa, as long as this version suits his artistic purposes. Unfortunately for Africans, the cliché-ridden description of the savage mistress with her dark and tempting sexuality is part of a long standing stereotype in which blacks are perceived as possessing a lustfulness and bestiality associated with the animal Kingdom. According to Ruth Cowhig, the belief in the excessive sexuality of blacks ‘was encouraged by the widespread belief in the legend that blacks were descendants of Ham in the Genesis story punished for their sexual excess by their blackness’ (Dabydeen (ed), 1985:1). As such black as a colour becomes a symbolic badge proclaiming the moral condition of a whole people. Consequently, the unspeakable sexual excesses of which Kurtz is accused become credible once they are identified within an African context as Conrad does here successfully. On the other hand very few people would deny the fact that such sexual stereotyping has been very harmful to black-white relations on a global scale. One can cite the abysmal black-white relations and the lynching which went on during as well as immediately after the slavery period in the Deep South of the United States. Fear of miscegenation and other numerous sexual horrors of an abominable and unspeakable type haunted the fathers of settlerdom in Southern Africa so much that statute books were filled with laws forbidding sex relations between blacks and whites. The fate of Mary Turner in Doris Lessing’s The Grass is Singing comes to mind here. So the sexual stereotyping that is related to the savage mistress is far from being a harmless exercise of the imagination. Together with other historical factors, such a sexual image has been very successful in needlessly widening the racial and cultural gulf separating whites from blacks and much damage has been done to both races, but more so to the blacks who are noted historically for their powerlessness and vulnerability.

Apart from the rather raw and unmediated process of stereotyping Africa and its blacks, a process which denies them a recognisable social order, there is also a certain moral inconsistency which is bound to puzzle many an African reader. One of the crimes which Kurtz is alleged to have
committed is that, according to Marlow 'he had taken a high seat amongst
the devils of the land - I mean literally' (Conrad, 1989:85). By projecting
the African as a sub-human primate devilish in character, Marlow violates
a sense of poetic justice which the blacks would rightfully regard as owing
them. In Marlow's narrative the African Native is in fact the victim of a
double injury: the historical victim of the European buccaneers who
brutalize him during the nineteenth century and the hapless victim of an
artistic process which, while condemning imperialism, uses him and
abuses him in the same breath. This does not only indicate a contradiction
in Marlow's character but also the limitations of a writer without a clear
moral standpoint or alternative.

If the fortune seeker is gaining materially from his exploitation of the
African, there is practically no way the likes of Marlow can persuade him
to desist from such an exercise since he has pronounced the black people
as devils. Christian history, of which the so-called 'pilgrims' are part, has
never been very accommodating to devils of any kind - be they real or
metaphorical. A good example here is the Papal Bull which authorised the
opening of one of the first black slave markets in Lisbon in the first
decade of the sixteenth century (Bitek, 1970;3). The reason given for such
an unprecedented act was that slavery would redeem blacks from the evils
of paganism. Even the cult of African savagery and primitivism which
Conrad's so-called masterpiece needs so desperately for its success is not
the harmless affair as it might look from a distance. Here is how one of
the holy fathers proposed to solve the problem of darkness and African
primitivity almost at the same time that Conrad was writing his book.

'Father Biehler is so convinced of the hopelessness of regenerating the Hashonas',
wrote Lord Grey from Chishawasha in January 1897, 'whom he regards as the most
hopeless of mankind...that he states that the only chance for the future of the race
is to exterminate the whole people, both male and female, over the age of 14! This
pessimistic conclusion,' Grey continued, 'I find it hard to accept'. (Ranger, 1967:3)

The presumed African darkness seems to have elicited a whole gamut of
human feelings - especially in Europeans, ranging from the most noble to
the frighteningly ignoble. Kurtz with his chilling utterance: 'exterminate
the brutes' is a good example and Marlow too. The latter's anti-
imperialistic stance becomes more muted the moment he begins his long
awaited journey up the river Congo. In fact Marlow's anti-imperialistic
discourse becomes subordinate to the imperatives of a story which, so one
can argue, degenerates into a sensational melodrama. As the language
becomes more abstract and metaphysical the very victim of imperialism
is, by a strange twist of logic, turned into a devil and, as such, he becomes
a scapegoat as well as the author of his own misfortunes. It may sound
old fashioned and simplistic but it needs saying nevertheless: there is
something of a moral untidiness that sits at the heart of Conrad's
masterpiece. This has all to do with the moral conception of the whole story. Conrad makes Marlow equivocate on a very crucial moral issue here and this makes him remain as ethnocentric and self-centred as the pilgrims he is so disdainful of. Marlow is simply incapable of acknowledging the humanity of those blacks conscripted by the forces of history to take part in an imperialist drama. The grossly exaggerated and luridly sensational barbarism associated with Africa is very much the kind of stuff characteristic of the boy's adventure story of the Victorian era - and this is the genre which the novel promises to outgrow at the beginning!

It is interesting to observe that Chinua Achebe's bitter criticism of *Heart of Darkness* as well as Michael Echeruo's unceremonious dismissal of it ironically betray the importance they attach to the novel. In fact *Heart of Darkness* is placed, both historically and imaginatively, at a strategic position from which African writers and scholars can ponder the magnitude of their predicament as they try to communicate across cultures. Conrad's metaphor of darkness with all its ironic implications, is, ultimately, based on a pejorative and fundamental oversimplification of a whole continent which Africans know has never been that simple and mysterious either. They also share the painful knowledge that Conrad is harping on myths which are ultimately rooted in and originating from societies whose relationship with Africa has hardly been based on what is truthful and mutually beneficial. These are societies associated with conquests of other parts of the world during the seventeenth century; societies which embarked on slavery during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and spearheaded imperialism of the nineteenth century. Throughout those centuries myths about Africa have either grown or diminished in relation to the economic role assigned to the inhabitants of the continent at a particular time in history.

In addition, anyone familiar with the emergence and growth of modern African literature will know that one of the factors which has inspired African writers, thinkers, and even politicians is the desire to address a whole battery of stereotypes about blacks which have remained lodged at the centre of the western imagination. In 1965 at Leeds University, Chinua Achebe said:

> I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. (Achebe, 1988:30)

One of the factors which sparked off Chinua Achebe's creativity was his encounter with Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* - a book which, unfortunately, harps on some of the myths propagated by Conrad's book. One can even go so far as to say that ideas associated with Negritude, African
Personality and indeed African nationalism itself have much to do with the desire on the part of the African to confront and refute a long standing tradition of abuse against blacks.

It is important to underline the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that Conrad tried to justify imperialism. The opposite seems to be more probable in fact. However his rather lazy over-dependence on metaphors and stereotypes which in history have been used to justify the physical and spiritual mutilation of non-whites cannot be counted as the strength of a great artist. Shakespeare may have initially accepted such stereotyping of black people in *Titus Andronicus* but towards the end of the same play the humanity of Aaron comes across in a way which modifies somewhat the earlier stereotype. In *Othello* the image of the black general transcends the prejudices of the Elizabethan era so as to enhance and extend our own vision of humanity. The same applies to the *Merchant of Venice* - a play in which stereotypes about Jews are indirectly questioned by the nature of the human interaction on the stage. As for Kurtz, he may be humanized by Africa and come to recognise his own hollowness, but that Africa remains physically and morally grotesque. The fact is Conrad allowed the prejudiced and popular imagination of his time to run away with his story of the Congo and in the process he prevented a whole continent from occupying its rightful place in the human family. His treatment of the Congolese setting and its people can only harden racist attitudes of his European audience. It is a paradoxical achievement that in order for Conrad to revitalise Europe spiritually he has to dehumanize and distort Africa beyond recognition first. His handling of the African dimension of his story amounts to a very cheap way of entertaining a jaded Europe afflicted by self-doubts; but, ultimately, every broad-minded reader has to come to terms with a story notable for its harsh exclusions and embarrassing racism.

Some critics have argued that the image of Africa portrayed in *Heart of Darkness* is Marlow’s version. It is true in so far as through Marlow’s ironic inconsistencies Conrad seems to have placed the whole sin of Europe on Marlow’s shoulders. For instance, while trying to detach himself from the sin of his people Marlow becomes deeply steeped in their prejudices and ends up regarding blacks like any other whiteman of his time. As such, there is no moral lesson to learn from him as regards the European attitude to Africa. Ultimately, however, readers have to talk about the author’s vision as it is revealed in the text, and it is a vision which, while critical of imperialism, reinforces unpalatable stereotypes about Africa. The moral revulsion of both Marlow and his mentor, Conrad, at the sordid nature of imperialism is not strong enough to transcend racial boundaries. There is an element of the Brabantio of *Othello*’s world in both of them - that pseudo-liberalism from which racism is never far beneath the surface. It is only fair to state that Conrad remained as much a racist as his European tradition allowed him, a
tradition one of whose philosophical spokesman was to declare with disarming confidence:

Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained - for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world - shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself - the land of childhood, which lying beyond the days of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night.

The negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality - all, that we call feeling - if we would rightly comprehend him; There is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character... [Africa] has no movement or development to exhibit. (Quoted by the West Indian writer and critic, George Lamming from Hegel's, Introduction to the Philosophy of History; Lamming, 1960:31-2)

Hegel remains one of the most exciting minds to contribute to the development of western philosophy, yet one wonders if his greatness can be based on the nauseating opinions he displays in the instance above. So much for the prejudices and ignorance which have been dutifully handed down to numerous western generations as acquired wisdom! By the same token, Heart of Darkness can be called great but one wonders at what price! The novel has been accorded the status of a classic in the western world but such a status is based on its capacity to peddle racist myths in the guise of good fiction.

Conrad's novel presents, regrettably, a powerful convergence of most of those stereotypes which have been bandied about in regard to the nature and status of black people in the world. These stereotypes concern their supposed ignorance and barbarism, their assumed simple-mindedness, their being childish and childlike, their irrationality and excessive lustfulness and their animal-like status - to name only a few. African writers and thinkers have been labouring under the burden of such false images for a long time, and it would be surprising if anyone familiar with the suffering and history of black people can label Heart of Darkness a masterpiece when it distorts a whole continent and its people. There is a terrible parallel here between the economic rape which Africa suffered and the artistic loot that Conrad gets away with!

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that Heart of Darkness betrays the fallibility of some of the so-called great writers and critics. As for African scholars and general readers, it is important to know that texts which are canonized as classics need not be regarded as such by all peoples at all times. These texts are rooted in specific societies at specific points in history and can sometimes, in a most unexpected way, nourish the very prejudices which any society in its right mind should struggle against. More significantly, writers such as Joseph Conrad can help in starting a debate about the fate of the oppressed, but, ultimately, they cannot be a substitute for the voice of the oppressed themselves. The discourse of liberation belongs to them. Finally, it is of vital importance that future
generations of Africans are sensitized to how peoples of other nations perceive Africa. Only then can they be well placed to relate to other races in a meaningful way.

REFERENCES


There was a complicated physical side to the ceremony, as with so many Hindu ceremonies: knowing where on the altar to put the sacrificial flowers, knowing how to sing the verses and when, knowing how and when and where to pour various substances: the whole mechanical side of priesthood.

V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*

I spread out new clothes
(bought from stores you avoided
insisting out of a meanness, on making do):
a suit, a vest, a shirt, a tie and
pants over a bag in which your body lies.

You are spared death’s grandeur;
no lying in state with rouged cheeks.
Your brother asks an attendant
‘Couldn’t you pretty him up a little?’

Avoiding touch, I brush you gently
then out of curiosity, prod you hard
hard against a zipped up bag
hard against the bone.

I want to see you again
whole, naked to the bone
charred black by the cold.

I walk around you
laying out objects as rehearsed with aunts
guessing at a sequence of order.
I empty phials of perfume
arrange flower petals
balance a chip of metal by your head-it should be in your mouth.

I confess to a tenderness
against your hardened bones.
An old anger long dissipated.

What remains still is a fear
as fixed as the scowl on your face
as real as the stench you left behind.

TRADEMARK

This woman tells me how you would arrive late unannounced, and on not finding a cooked meal kick her as she lay rolled up on a stone floor;

of how you have thrown her small child
across an open floor against a bare wall;

of how you have used whatever came to hand to harm;
of how you have built a garden at the back to stop her five children from playing outside;

of how you have bolted all windows and each door;
of how you have ordered her to stay indoors.

You have maimed and hurt across three continents,
abused all those who came into your care.

If you were still alive
I may yet roll fear into a fist
and beat my rage out of you.
Men leave behind some acts of kindness
in a life lived, for the most part, shabbily.

You have left behind cowering children
and silent women staring in shuttered rooms;
frightened by their own helplessness

and an indelible trademark:
  a fist, at boot.

A WING

A great aunt uncovers a brass plate
to read in the smear of white flour
(spread on the day of your cremation)
the means by which you left this life.

She pauses, as I strain in the circle
of women, hoping to see...see what?
A plane, a car, a horse-drawn chariot
Like Surya's, the sun god, rising like a flower?

My great aunt, a surviving custodian of customs,
wise with owl white hair, warm with white fur,
perches in the centre, 'It is hard to say ...
but wait ... this looks like a wing of an aeroplane.'
The circle flaps to reassure her and all will a plane
in the spread of white now flecked with grey.

I see only a wing and want almost to jeer;
but it is hard to say how you went.
You had been gone so long,
so much of you had seeped through;
so much of you a rubberised lava
on the floor of your final resting place.
If it is true that you have not yet departed, seeped instead into lives scarred by your shadow, I still cannot will you a one-way ticket on an aeroplane with just one wing.

ONE KNOCK DOWN OR TWO SUBMISSIONS

You wanted me to be a wrestler. For a while you encouraged me to eat meat, drink milk and exercise on a set of chest expanders.

You cajoled my sister, just a year older, but a lot stronger, to wrestle with me. She usually won, much to your pleasure. You grew disappointed at what I could do.

You knew I liked reading, knowing little of why, or how reading removed me from you. Not able to read English yourself, you made me read aloud titles of Hindi films in English from leaflets posted through the door. When the sounds I made did not match yours, you scorned and your displeasure grew.

I now watch wrestling on television with my daughter we delight at the sight of over the top stunts of wrestlers in sequins or at a leotarded brute wielding a plank of wood in the ring. I do not know if you would have approved of this: this showing off or laying bare the performer's art.

Learning late that you made all the rules before the start, mocks the final bell.
MADRAS

I have grown accustomed to this draught,
learning to live and breathe a humid air.
The rains have failed another year;
verandahs are dry, the stench chokes.

Shoving past stares and persistent guides,
I watch a row of insubstantial stalls.
A line of open sewer ferments
a step in front of vendors’ huts.

A paan seller comes out from behind
a curtain’s shade, stretches,
scratches, then in open view pisses
a step in front into the ditch.

It worried Gandhi, it appalled Naipaul.
I, in turn am struck in Madras
how the obvious is so oblivious
to those that live in this state.

Like fostering a fascination
with the smell of your own farts,
you add to the spill and pelt
and call it your own.

BLINDFOLD: EXERCISES IN TRUST

for Catherine Byron

(i)
I taught him to read signs
of what to trust
my hands
a guide for his eyes

How a landscape can deceive
how a lake
so much like a moon
can drown your shadow

(ii)
You taste of wet grass
your body is bruised like a wall
your hands are covered by bark

your fingers are branches
    numb to my touch
without you I am lost

(iii)
I trusted you when you
took away my eyes

I walked in your shadow
as you led me through moonlight

I crawled on all fours
as you stood over me

I drank from a broken tap
as you turned on the hose

I cut myself falling
as you took away my hand

I waited for you to come
as you left me drowning in a pool

(iv)
I waited for you to hold me
for your body
    a frame of clothes
to break my fall

(v)
Is it you or is it them
who walk away from me?
The auto-rickshaw swayed and jerked over the rubble. It stopped at the end of the lane, in a kind of open undefined area with at pile of garbage to the side. Pigs nosed and shuffled, grunting peacefully. Also in the pile stood two small boys, shock-haired with dust, dressed in tattered shorts. They held long hooked sticks and were jabbing them at the larger bits of paper in the garbage. Then they would flick the paper expertly into open gunny-bags which were lying on the road. Behind them rose the familiar thick green of a mosque’s dome.

As the auto-rickshaw stopped, a crowd of half-naked children appeared from nowhere and surrounded the vehicle, unsmiling, unmoving, and determined to extract everything possible from this new event. Sunita emerged from the auto feeling as she always did on these occasions - a kind of resentment, a kind of fear, overlaid by a slightly artificial exhilaration. She smiled at the children.

‘Where is the house of’ - she consulted her notebook - ‘Sanniben?’

A group of men who were standing outside the mosque began shouting at once. ‘Just there. Next to the pan-shop. Kallu, you lazy lout! Show the memsaab!’ The children began running ahead of her in an untidy trail, shouting and pointing. Since Sanniben lost her husband in the riots, she had obviously become an important figure.

She was waiting outside her door with an air of knowing what it was all about. Her dupatta was wrapped, with some deliberation, around her head and shoulders. She had a small pinched face and frizzy hair.

‘From the newspaper? Come, Come,’ she said. ‘I have been waiting since early morning, I couldn’t even wash the utensils.’

Earlier Sunita would have countered, hurt, ‘But I never said I was coming early in the morning.’ Now she smiled noncommittally and lowered herself onto the piece of mat which Sanniben spread for her. Further back in the room there was a string cot, some cooking utensils, and a pile of clothes hanging together on one hook.

The children had lined up at the door. ‘Eh! You there Kallu!’ Sanniben said again - to the oldest child, Sunita saw. ‘Go and bring a cold drink for the memsaab.’ She fumbled inside her blouse and produced a cloth purse. ‘Only tea,’ Sunita said calmly.

‘Have a cold drink, memsaab. When someone like you comes to my house, it is a big day for me.’
'Cold drinks make me ill,' smiled Sunita, repeating a well-rehearsed phrase. 'Tea is best.' The children waited and watched.

'Well?' Sanniben barked suddenly at Kallu. 'Waiting for your grandmother's wedding?'

Kallu scurried away and the children dissolved in giggles.

'Move out, all you no-good louts,' said Sanniben. 'Kallu is the only one of you who's worth half a paisa. He's not right in the head,' she confided to Sunita, 'but he's a good boy, a very good boy. Belongs to the watchman.'

By now the news of Sunita's arrival had spread and two or three other women, slightly shamefaced, were loitering up to Sanniben's door.

'Oh yes, come in all of you,' Sanniben said. 'The cinema is just beginning.'

The women giggled, uncertain. One of them began to back away.

'But I do want to see them, if they were harmed by the riots,' Sunita said. 'Those who were affected should be asked to come.'

'Then they will all come,' Sanniben said disgustedly. 'Give them half a chance and they'll all arrive cackling like hens. That Banu there, she only lost her sister-in-law's cousin, and that only in last year's riots, not this year's. But whenever the newspaper people come she arrives first and talks the most.'

Banu retreated abashed.

'Call them anyway,' Sunita said firmly, taking out her cassette recorder. She avoided looking at Sanniben. 'All you children, move back. That's right. Now one of you go and say this in all the houses. Anyone whose house was burnt, or whose relatives were killed, is to come here. This year! This year mind, not last year!'

But the children were already racing away. In a very few seconds about thirty women had arrived, some with babies. The crowd of children extended half-way down the lane. Sanniben glanced at Sunita with reproachful triumph.

'Bring some mats,' Sunita said a little nervously. 'Now spread them here. Is there any traffic on this lane?'

'No, no, memsaab,' said a chorus of voices. 'The bus stops at the main road.'

'Good. Now I want to know.....yes? What is the matter?'

The tea had arrived. Kallu was trying to push his way through the half-seated, half-standing women. As soon as they saw Sunita's tea they made a little aisle for Kallu to pass through. There was a respectful silence. Kallu reverently placed the saucerless cup on the ground near Sunita. Next to it he placed a small ball of newspaper which contained rough flaky biscuits.

'Thank you,' Sunita said to him. 'You're a very good boy.' Kallu grinned ferociously into his sleeve and vanished among the group of children.
Sanita shipped the tea quickly, to show that she was happy to eat with them. Then she smiled brilliantly at Sanniben, in view of the latter's still ominous silence. 'Now,' she said. 'We will first hear Sanniben, of course.' She looked round at the women. Since we are here without our men, we can talk as much as we want.'

There was delighted, continuing laughter. Sanniben, adjusting her dupatta, showed signs of relenting.

'Oon the twelfth of July,' she began, still very gravely, 'I was making my husband's rotis in the morning. I had just lit the stove. Munni was playing in the mud right here.' In the fluent rehearsed phrases Sunita could see the influence of the three journalists who had come before her.

'Is Munni the smallest?'

'Yes memsaab. The one who came after her didn't last.'

'How many children living?'

'Seven'.

'Husband's job?'

'He was in the mill. When the mill closed down he used to hire an autorkshaw sometimes, if he could get it. Sometimes twice, sometimes three times a week - and then he had to drive all night. But he never let us go to bed hungry.'

Sanniben's voice trailed suddenly and she lifted her dupatta to her eyes. Some of the other women did likewise.

'It is terrible,' Sunita said. 'Just terrible. Don't think I don't know. But you have to tell me. Go on. What happened while you were making the rotis?'

'One of the men from the sweeper's colony came running here. They are friendly and good to us. He said, sister, all of you must go away at once. Like last year. He told us that Ramu dada (he is the big bootlegger here, memsaab) had called all his goondas the night before. A meeting. And they were going to attack at eleven o'clock.'

'Did you know that trouble had started in other parts of town?'

'My husband had heard of it the night before. And he brought the rickshaw back early.'

'Then what did you do?'

'The first thing I did was to send the two smallest away with the sweeper. You can trust those people, memsaab, they are better than one's own relatives.' And Sanniben lifted her dupatta to her eyes again. One of the women sitting near Sanniben murmured in agreement. 'Is it their fault that they are low-caste?' she said.

'Then the stones started,' said another voice.

'Yes, then the stones started,' said several other women immediately. They could contain themselves no longer. 'Stones and broken bottles, from those buildings over there.'

'Yes, memsaab, broken bits of soda bottles.'
There were roars of laughter. Sunita smiled discreetly, trying to maintain some sense of occasion.

When the laughter had died down she said, 'Did the police do nothing at all, then?'

'Only when the Inspector saab came,' the vigorous woman said. 'Then they became, oh twenty saints in one.'

'And were any of you hurt by the stones?'

'Some of the children, memsaab. Her little one, and hers. All the children who were playing on the road came home screaming. They ran as if the devil were after them, poor things.' (Suppose Nisha, coming home from school, were being pelted by stones and fireballs?)

'What happened after that?' Sunita specifically addressed the dark thin woman, so as to get a clear answer.

'After that....' the woman hesitated. 'Then there was more and more noise, memsaab. And we were afraid a gang was coming here. Then we didn't know what to do. Then some of the men - five, six of them - went to the end of the lane with some mattresses. They thought that they would set the mattresses on fire and block the road. Her husband -' she gestured to Sanniban - 'also went. Then they got him.'

Sunita waited a minute. 'And then they came and looted your houses?'

'No. They did that after the police came and took us away in the truck.'

The narrative had ended. The women waited motionless. A faint breeze, incongruous in this setting, stirred through the crowd.

'Memsaab,' the dark woman said shyly, 'What will you write?'

Sunita never had a very good reply to this question. 'We must try and write the truth,' she said. 'We must expose those who do this'.

'Exactly!' said the vigorous woman triumphantly. 'And we must finish them off. No, Memsaab? When they kill one of us, we must kill ten of them.'

And now this. The sun was high in the sky and flies were buzzing around her empty cup. Sunita fiddled deliberately with her recorder, so as to hide her weariness. The women were watching her with suppressed excitement.

'There is no 'us' and 'them', she said gently. 'Anyone who harms another is an outcaste. Whatever community he belongs to. We must learn to think like that.'

There was a respectful but unconvinced silence. Sunita felt incapable of saying anything more. The silence continued.

Then, because of the stillness, she noticed a very faint keening sound which, she realised now, had never stopped. It came from a young woman sitting at the back, whose head was bent low over her knees. Sunita realised that she had been moaning steadily, uncaring, unattended, from the beginning.

'Did that girl lose someone in the trouble?' she demanded.

The women seemed to hesitate. Sunita turned to Sanniben.
‘She lost her baby, poor thing,’ Sanniben said. ‘But not in the riots, memsaab. The baby died of pneumonia before the trouble began. She has been like that ever since.’

‘And what is the use?’ said another woman. ‘Is God going to send the baby back? There now, stop it.’ She and a couple of others began patting the young mother on the back.

But all this attention seemed to have an unsettling effect on her. She had been keening quietly, but now she began to tremble. Her huge dark eyes filled with tears, and she gazed at Sunita as if only pleading to be killed herself.

‘Ah, but a baby is a baby,’ said Sanniben. ‘I lost my husband, and I say, all right. I said to God, all right. Go ahead and do what you want. But when my new little one went, I wanted the roof to fall on me and finish me off. Go, fetch her some water from my urn there.’

A couple of the women hurried into the house. A steel tumbler was found, water was brought, willing hands supported the young woman as she drank a few sips. Then she sank back.

There was the time when Nisha, dehydrated from gastroenteritis, had had to be rushed to hospital. Sunita remembered sitting in the car, knowing there might be no tomorrow worth living for.

She raised her head with the fear still upon her. With such a memory, it is no relief to remember that it is over. The terror lies in the fact that it can happen at all.

Slightly dizzy, blinded by the sun, Sunita asked a question at random.

‘Do you know who is paying Ramu dada?’

‘Who knows, memsaab,’ Sanniben said. ‘Some no-good minister may be.’

The large woman said suddenly, sharply, ‘How shouldn’t we know? Don’t we know the elections are coming? Don’t we know what politicians do? Have we lived all these years for nothing?’

Everyone was taken aback. The women around the speaker tried to nudge her into silence. The eager-looking woman began smiling persistently at Sunita, willing her to smile back.

‘I know it is terrible,’ Sunita said. ‘And that is why we try to write about these things, so that.....’

‘And while you are writing we can go on being killed, eh?’

Now there was visible hostility all round. There were angry murmurs against the speaker. One of the women said, ‘You haven’t even lost anyone this time. Keep quiet.’

‘And I hope you will never lose anyone again,’ Sunita said peaceably. She glanced surreptitiously at her watch. She had to file her story by five o’clock. She smiled affectionately at the anxious faces around her. ‘I have to go now. And you have to go home and make the rotis, don’t you?’

There were relieved smiles all round. Sunita collected her handbag, dark glasses, cassette recorder. Kallu was despatched to find an auto. For a minute Sunita held both of Sanniben’s hands.
'Next time you must eat in my house, memsaab.'
'In mine, in mine.'
'It is my daughter's wedding next month. You must come, memsaab, you and all your family.'

And as Sunita was about to enter the auto there was an interruption. An old woman, very shrivelled and very deaf, had obviously had an afterthought.
'Memsaab.'

Sunita turned and all the women paused. The children surrounded them, expectant. The old woman had raised her hand and was making her way through the crowd.
'Yes?'

The old woman reached Sunita and began adjusting her dupatta. She was not going to throw this moment away. Some of the women began to smile.
'Memsaab, my son lost his cycle in the riots. Near the factory. He has a good job in the factory. He is a good boy, memsaab, even though he drinks sometimes, smokes sometimes. I say, so what? Is he not young?'
The old woman gestured grandly. Everyone smiled again. The driver of the auto grinned and switched off his engine.
'Tell the memsaab what you want,' somebody said.
'Do I need you to teach me? You all think I'm a fool just because I'm old.' One of the children giggled and the old woman broke off to give him a resounding buffet. 'Quiet, you son of an owl.'
'Did you want my help in recovering the cycle?' Sunita asked.
'Yes, memsaab. It was outside the big factory. Will you tell the Collector Saab?'
'I'll certainly see what I can do,' Sunita said, as affectionately, as unhurriedly, as possible. 'Certainly. And now....?''
'Don't forget my daughter's wedding, memsaab.'
'And the meal in my house.'
'And in mine.'
The auto started up again. The women moved back a little, as little as possible, and the auto drove away.
At the Funeral Parlors, Singapore Casket

Shirley Geok-lin Lim

AT THE FUNERAL PARLOURS, SINGAPORE CASKET

'Perhaps the past is a paper house.'
Patricia Ikeda

Pastor John in platform shoes walks to the boom box on the concrete floor, bends over, and turns the knob till the volume hisses, 'WE SHALL MEET BY THAT BEAUTIFUL SHORE.' Red-hot ginger blossoms gape among maiden-hair fern, their musk jabbing like carrion.

A pale lemon giant worm, you lie embowered beneath more bouquets than lovers or children had delivered to your door. 'What honour!' someone says, of the calling cards from the rich brother's corporate associations. They fall off frangipani leis, names engraved, like so many gold-rimmed kinfolk.

This moment is new. Disbelief lies on your waxy cheek. Before the sermon Pastor John invites a prophetic bond with me, the daughter from New York. I have arrived decades late, after the red Singapore-chopped aerogrammes that urged scripture and held out for attention. Then the charismatics are gone: the Chinese pastor headed for Los Angeles, the greying ladies and lonely Tamil adolescents, minor bureaucrats whose Christ raises the dead, looking for nothing your island can offer.

I also leave you, to gawk at the Taoist shaman. He stacks pyramids of gold paper bricks before the Chinese funeral room next door. I watch for his unknown dead as he pours brandy over the extravagant wealth, and sets the conflagration with a Cricket barbeque starter. Electric blue Mercedes models and towering skyscrapers flash up behind acetate Maytag deep freezers.
The black-hatted paper man in coat-tails toasts crisply down to a twisted heap. Casually the Taoist jumps over the fire, once, twice, three times. Lifting his robes above his pants he clears the flames. The bamboo bones burn slower, glowing long after the papery ash collapses, long after you have been delivered to the crematorium, accompanying Christian smoke and ash into the earth.

**WALKING AROUND IN A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE**

Everyday the syllables surge like waves (oder Reise, noch nicht, Ausgang, Dichter), a bang against your doors of perception that bar progress.

If you listen hard enough, you could imagine yourself speaking it in this life (Jahr, sprechen Sie Deutsch? Nein, nein. Ich spreche es nicht.)

Not the grammar in books, or on train notices, nor the lips that open, close, smile pityingly. But here in my mouth this round word, a marble of my identity, rolls out, faster and faster.

**SELF-PORTRAIT**

I want to write a self-portrait like Rosario Castellanos who knew herself so well she could knife herself in the back and laugh. She knew how she appeared to the world, her desire awry like a misplaced wig. But I cannot see myself. My eye is mercurial. I flake, the particulars
drizzling with deformations.
I know how to be happy
but lack the means.
Unlike my friend Rosario
my skin is thin. Inside its bag
are late-night monsters
impossible to describe.
They watch even as my green-stem son eats noodlesoup.
I have more desires than
there are wigs in the world:
to be what I am not.
Also to be myself. To speak
many languages, each
as useful as this one that
I wipe my tears with.
I want to be good and better
than I am. I want to sway
like the swaying palms
and hold heavy books in my hands.
According to the precepts of recent theory, history ought to be understood as a quantum series, a set of what Foucault in his middle writings calls discontinuities: random and self-reflexive events that defy structural, categorical or teleological definition. Yet as analysts of contemporary culture and contemporary social life — and this point Foucault himself ultimately concedes — we are perhaps duty bound to unlock broader referential and heuristic patterns in order to account more fully for the multiple contingencies directing our personal and social destinies. To this extent, Australia’s integration with the South East Asian region appears to have become an axiom in public discussion, though the specific nature and degree of this historical osmosis remains problematic. With specific reference to Bali, the most extant and commonly imagined constituency of the Far East-Near North constellation, this essay would hope to elucidate some of the cultural-discursive and socio-political dimensions of this integration process.

Thus, just as our politicians, economists and business leaders exalt the virtues of an international capitalist consciousness, many of our most prominent cultural analysts and a number of fictionalists are producing studies and tales which seem to serve gladly the requirements of this new commercial regionalism. What is needed, we are told, is the complete surrender of those jingoistic, xenophobic and morally depraved cultural conceits which shackle Australia to a Eurocentric time-warp, and which, according to Alison Bronowski’s *The Yellow Lady*, produce an intensified version of Western Orientalism:

The Anglo gripped, Euro-centric West-skewed view of the world, which even well-educated Australians inherited, locked many into thinking anachronistically of Australia as discovered not located, colonized not invaded, and of Asian countries...as the white man’s burden, to be dominated, democratised, developed, defeated, or defended. Eurocentricism might produce mild intellectual anorexia in some Europeans; in Australia the condition could be life-threatening.
### A, B, C, D

**En jersey pour pulls, 40 cm, imprimé aux motifs floraux et côtés de 1 mm.**

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- **Couleur devant:** Taille imprimée.
- **Finition double papier.**
- **Poids de tissu:** 357/358.

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**B.** Le cadrage imprimé. 
- **Col:** Col rond, boutonnage sur les épaules.
- **Finition:** Doublure en tissu contrastant.

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**C.** Le jean évasé imprimé. 
- **Col:** Col rond.
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**D.** La robe imprimée. 
- **Col:** Col rond.
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*Putu Goes to Paris.*
Bronowski’s fearful prognosis echoes Ross Garnaut’s analysis of the north east Asian ascendancy which he contrasts with the crippling economic failures of Australia. In Garnaut’s terms Australia needs to become more Asian oriented in its outlook and more diverse in its internal constitution. Like Stephen Castles et al and innumerable other enthusiasts for multiculturalism, Garnaut argues that the greater ‘Asianification’ of the Australian population and culture would produce an economic landbridge to Asia — and hence access to the region’s economic magic pudding.

This Asianification would also bring joy to the hearts of those cultural theorists and social critics who are ‘re-writing the archive’, as Simon During describes it, those postcolonialists in particular who have made it their duty to reconfigure the history of the world by reducing the European cultural inheritance to ‘one heritage among many others’. Politically, this reduction demands the ‘systematic rereading of the archive, and in particular a reinterpretation of canonical works’. This is precisely the critical and ideological project of Edward W. Said whose re-examination of the European scholarly and fictional canons leads him to conclude that the economic and military enslavement of the non-European world by the colonial superpowers was as much a function of culture and language as of ‘profit and the hope of more profit’:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as ‘inferior’ or ‘subject races’, ‘subordinate peoples’, ‘dependency’, ‘expansion’, and ‘authority’.

Indeed, while colonialism as an economic and political mechanism has passed away, imperialism, as Said defines it, ‘lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural space, as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices’. The task of the ideologically informed cultural critic, then, is to expose imperialism (or ‘neo-colonialism’ in other critics’ terms) where it lingers — and for the Said of Culture and Imperialism the literary canon is the most insidious and therefore most powerful of these cultural spaces.

Commentators like Alison Bronowski have taken Said’s critical and methodological paradigm, simplified it, and applied it to the Antipodean context. Bronowski makes much of the Orientalist stereotype that pervades colonial and recent Australian fictional and artistic texts. Everyone from Percy Granger to Norman Lindsay, Christopher Koch to John Duigan is judged guilty of jingoistic dabblings or the sorts of sexual stereotyping which Chilla Bulbeck sees as involving ‘the construction of white masculinity as normative’ and the native woman as ‘licentious and
depraved and therefore...the property of the white men'. This view of course has become a commonplace for feminist studies of East West relations. The ABC's Coming Out Show, for example, dedicated an entire program to exposing the patriarchal and neo-imperialist depravities inherent in Dennis O' Rourke's The Good Woman of Bangkok (1992), a film which, according to its detractors, implicates its maker in the ideology of transnational sexual exploitation.

Peter Mares, producer of the ABC's India-Pacific program, sees this stereotyping as part of a more endemic deficiency in Australia's electronic media: 'Take for example the "Singapore girl" syndrome — airline promotions which emphasize the exotic and the erotic, implicitly confirming images of Asian women as submissive and available for the desires of Western men'. Mares speaks of other generic types such as 'the clever little man' and the 'chop suey' syndromes, both of which demonstrate the shallowness of the Australian media in producing images of Asia. Like Richard Gehrmann who claims simply that the Australian media 'distorts' Asia by genericizing it, Mares argues that the stereotyping of individual Asian persons is symptomatic of the treatment and representation of Asia as a generalized geographic-cultural category:

So the terms 'Asia' and 'Asian' are dangerous ones: they suggest that Asia is in fact a place which can be defined, that is homogenised. This smacks of a colonial mentality, one which sees Asia as 'the Orient', a region of scenic rice-fields, mountain ranges and peasants, on the one hand; bustling, dirty, confusing, congested cities on the other... (Promoting this image of a mythical place called Asia was in my view the really serious sin of the well-intentioned ABC-TV series Embassy.).

Mares' view of TV series like Embassy echoes other commentators' disapproval of the substitution of a genuine national locale in films such as The Year of Living Dangerously (The Philippines for Indonesia) and Far East (Macao for The Philippines).

Similarly, Sylvie Shaw, a consultant to the media liaison organization, Asialink, argues that the tendency of Australian films and mini-series to produce Orientalist stereotyping, especially of women, limits the Australian public's knowledge of the real conditions and people of Asia. Shaw acknowledges that the new interest in Asia, economically and culturally, may be producing negative as well as positive effects. Australia's desire for self-actualization subsumes any genuine exposition of culture and geography:

By raising the profile of Asians and Asian themes, there can be a tendency to overlook the 'cultural specificity' of the different Asian nations and ethnic groups within these countries... And while we continue to set films and mini-series like Far East, Bangkok Hilton, Vietnam and Turtle Beach in Asia, they tend to be more about our search for identity than they do about Asia.
Shaw is quite specific in her criticisms, in fact, claiming that films like Peter Weir’s *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982), John Duigan’s *Far East* (1982) and Phil Noyce’s *Echoes of Paradise* (1986) merely employ the generic Asia as an aesthetic and commercial device: ‘The mystery of Asia tugs at our primitive heart strings. Tropical beaches, magical cultures, exotic landscapes, sexual encounters — an escape from our everyday lives’. 15 Thus the Australian visitor to Asia ‘goes Troppo’, as Frieda Frieberg puts it, taking the ill-informed and unsuspecting audience with him or her. Adventurers like Maria in *Echoes of Paradise*, ‘unleash the repressed sexuality of the suburbs, and, after a whirlwind holiday romance, they return to their families and their mundane existence’. 16

Central to both Shaw’s and Mares’ analyses is Annette Hamilton’s combination and adaptation of Benedict Anderson’s theory of ‘imagined community’ with a generalised borrowing from Freud-Lacanian psychoanalytical conceits. Hamilton also sees Phil Noyce’s *Echoes of Paradise* as an Orientalist text; however as in d’Alpuget’s novels, the imaginative expropriation of the East (Bali/Thailand) and its sexuality by the West (Australia) is carried out by a woman. Hamilton, in fact, attempts to provide some theoretical coherence to the opposing sensations of fear and sexual attraction which inform the Orientalist attitude. The imagination of nationhood which is so brilliantly described by Anderson is extended by Hamilton to include the ‘neo-colonialist’ absorption of non-sovereign territories; Australia’s imagination of itself and its own community embraces the sexuality, territory and culture of the East:

This is not an appropriation of ‘the real’; it is an appropriation of commodified images, which permits the Australian national imaginary to claim certain critical and valuable aspects of ‘the Other’ as essentially part of itself, and thereby claim both a mythological and spiritual continuity of identity which is otherwise lacking. 17

Hamilton goes on to claim that this imaginative appropriation is tainted by the equally potent fear of contact, most particularly as it is ‘linked to the profound, historically rooted Australian (British) racism, and is articulated in the danger of the ultimate merger between self and other’. 18 Thus, like Humphrey McQueen who has described Australian nationalism as ‘British imperialism intensified by its proximity to Asia’, 19 Hamilton links Australian identity and the Australian national imaginary to Eurocentric Orientalism. Siew Keng Chua and Suvendrini Perera 20 are also concerned with the relationship between the imaging of Asia and the constitution of the Australian identity which both believe to be Orientalist and, as Perera claims, discernibly ‘anxious’ in inclination and character. Perera, in fact, is deeply suspicious of those antipodean neophytes who do not share her own and Edward Said’s post-colonised pedigree. Specifically, she has serious misgivings over the-
...recent recognition of - and celebratory exploration into - a newfound 'postcolonial' condition [which] often pass over the problems posed by an older self-image of Australia as regional heir to the coloniser's discarded nature. This history places Australia in an unequal and uneasy triangle with Europe (and especially Britain) at one end, and Asia on the other — a relationship perceived as a set of continuing hierarchical rearrangements based on current conditions of military, economic and cultural (which also at times includes racial) superiority.  

With minor variations, Perera's summary accords with the views also being espoused by other Australian followers of the Said paradigm. Orientalism (along with neo-Imperialism) becomes a consummate description of Australian culture. To this extent, these Australian cultural analysts would perhaps applaud Said's contention, most recently and expansively elaborated in Culture and Imperialism, that any imaginative articulation in Western texts of the previously colonized peoples and cultures of the world constitutes an act of appropriation. Thus, even those canonical texts of Austen, Conrad, Gide or Forster which might have seemed to challenge illiberal, undemocratic, repressive or colonialist practices — and which remain, according to poststructural precepts, trapped in their own historical-cultural contexts — are ultimately damnable. It is simply unacceptable, Said would insist, for the privileged imagination to produce its narrative out of the suffering, material privation and cultural disenfranchisement of so unequal a partner, the silenced other.

In effect, this approach to transnational communication — what might productively be called De-Orientalism, the deconstruction of Orientalist imagery — has become something of an orthodoxy,  

a favoured point of departure, for recent Australian cultural analysis. While it is not my intention here to examine the theoretical and historiographic implications of this approach, it is necessary to point out that these analyses themselves constitute precisely that 're-writing' of the archive to which we have earlier referred. This new cultural description represents a new version of 'the East', one which is also and inevitably a new version of Australia and a new version of the context within which Australia and its regional neighbours communicate. While Sylvie Shaw seems to have missed this general point, Alison Bronowski — again following Said's observation in Orientalism — has been incisive enough to realise that any representation of 'the other' is inevitably a statement about 'the self': when Australians write about Asia they are writing about, indeed forming, their own imaginations and identities. Clearly, the emphasis of De-Orientalism — deriving from poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories — is on the representation of things and the configuration of realities that may have no grounding in truth. Yet while Said is at least cognizant of the theoretical dangers of such an approach, many of the Australian cultural analysts proceed as if their own version or representation is itself the
correct, real and unassailable one. Their analyses are designed to
demonstrate the deficiency of other versions, while their own version
takes on the condition of what Lyotard calls self-legitimatizing narrative.

These, of course, are the well documented perils of deconstruction. What needs to be acknowledged, nevertheless, is that De-Orientalism produces particular kinds of critical and ideological effects, and that it too is part of an historical and cultural project which produces rather than describes history, the real and the true. Specifically, the De-Orientalists’ celebration of ‘difference’ or ‘otherness’ reverses the dialectic, producing a simplified historical cartography of goodies (victims) and baddies (perpetrators). While of course there are a number of very sophisticated adaptations of the Derridean and Lacanian paradigms, the Australian orthodoxy tends to have simplified concepts of self and other in order to establish a coherent ideological position for the advancement of the multicultural or pluralist doctrine. Perhaps to redress the infamies of White Australia, security paranoia, regional neglect and the attempted genocide of its indigenous people, these commentaries have denounced pejorative versions of difference and replaced them with a more celebratory version. Thus, in re-examining the Australian canonical texts and re-writing the archive, the Australian De-Orientalists have condemned false difference, measuring it against a ‘difference’ which is genuine and valuable: Bronowski applauds the multi-lingual, multicultural, transnational writer; Sylvie Shaw congratulates mini-series like Aya, a transnational production with ‘real’ Chinese protagonists; and Simon During, Sneja Gunew and Chilla Bulbeck celebrate the ethnic specificity of liberationist texts written by the world’s genuinely marginalized and diasporic peoples.

If ever this new version of history is recognised as a configuration rather than a truth (During, Said and Stuart Hall occasionally concede as much), it is nevertheless justified as morally and politically superior to the older canon which remains implicated in Imperialism and Orientalism, and which fails to deliver the ‘universal’ emancipations promised by democratic liberalism. Clearly, and as we noted in the introduction to this discussion, this re-writing (and re-validating) of history has its own roots in broader cultural and politico-social processes. Thus, while a concept like multiculturalism has never achieved anything like uniform or universal popularity in the broader Australian community, it has, as sociologist Katharine Betts outlines, become a powerful and governing ethos in national cultural policy. While Betts’ analysis is directed specifically toward the immigration policy and its relationship to multiculturalism, her elucidation of the new social class of altruistic cosmopolitans provides useful insights for our more general understanding of re-writing of Australia’s cultural communion with Asia. Betts writes of the new class’s hostility toward any who question the ‘unassailable’ economic or cultural
virtues of multiculturalism. These altruistic cosmopolitans, Betts tells us, preclude discussion on the issue of cultural pluralism or immigration generally by branding any equivocators as damnable racists:

The explanation for the intelligentsia's attitude to immigration does not lie with any sophisticated cost-benefit analysis... The perspective offered by altruists and cosmopolitans, with its themes of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, exotic foods and customs, and its imagery based on compassion for the world's poor, is more attractive [than perspectives based on economic or ecological data], providing an intriguing blend of urbane sophistication and low-cost benevolence. The development of this way of looking at immigration has coincided with rapid growth in the numbers of new-class professionals... They have used it [the ideology of cosmopolitanism and altruism] to shape an identity based on a clear distinction between people of insight, discernment and cosmopolitan understanding, and the narrow parochialism of their parents' generation. 21

Betts' conception of altruistic cosmopolitanism also echoes Stuart Hall's notion of the global postmodern, the cultural conduit of international capitalism 'which works in and through specificity'. 29 That is, Hall tells us, as well as its propensity to absorb all things, all cultures and all people into its relentless commodifying embrace, the international flow of capital also functions to enhance and utilize difference to its own ends. Thus, the new pluralism celebrated by and configured in postmodernism becomes the 'international cuisine' of the cosmopolitan First World city dweller — though not a cuisine being enjoyed by the indigent of Calcutta. 30

While Betts and Hall have quite distinct ideological and heuristic purposes, their work alerts us to those broader social and cultural fields in which the re-writing of Australia's national and regional identity is taking place. In particular we are alerted to the central contradiction which the altruistic cosmopolitan and De-Orientalist perspective continually confronts but never satisfactorily reconciles: that is, the pursuit of a supposedly irreducible ethnic or national specificity must accommodate those broader spheres of reference to which we earlier referred. Most notably, the enthusiasts of specificity have had considerable trouble accounting for and incorporating the processes of globalism and global integration into their own theoretical, aesthetic or ideological program. There are certainly a number of theorists, most particularly those influenced by Marxist and neo-Marxist thinking, who argue that these integrative processes are part of the broader all-commodifying impulse of capital. Commentators like Lipietz, Wallerstein and Harvey 31 would suggest that this all-commodifying tendency ultimately dilutes and reduces the differences between individuals, peoples and their cultures. Claiming a similarly oppositional position, a number of Australian De-Orientalists 32 demand the emancipation of the individual or ethnic minority against the greater power of Eurocentric or imperialist monophonia which is complicit with global capitalism. None of these writers nor their theoretical foundations, however, seems able to account
adequately for the contradictions implicit in the new and shifting formations of international capitalism: on the one hand the skewed ethnic and national formations which once divided the modern world are being dissolved by this erratic and restless flow of capital, absorbing formerly colonised peoples into its utilitarian and pleasure playing web; and on the other hand new and old political and economic megapolies continue to deny the aspirations, pleasures and freedoms of other individuals and groups. The ethnic essentialism of these De-Orientalists — and here I would include Said himself — fails to acknowledge its own inclination toward an orthodoxy that cannot deal with multiple and precarious power interactions, complexity and contradiction. Rather, power is seen as fixed in immobile super-structures, themselves supported by historical rhizomes that continue to determine, as they underlie, the patterns of the contemporary globe, its culture and political economy.

Other De-Orientalists, while parading an equally uncritical brand of ethnic essentialism, seem to take a more liberal utilitarian view, tacitly accepting, if not approving of, the integrative processes of global capitalism. These writers confront the issue of Australia’s economic decline, and argue that national economic advantage would be best served through ethnic realignment and reconstitution. These writings elide theoretical difficulty altogether, seeing no contradiction between integrative and separative processes: difference, deployed in the international capitalist program, becomes essentialized as the cure for Australia’s economic (and social-cultural) ills. Australia’s own status as a minor or marginalised international player might somehow be redeemed through a genuine restitution of the liberal Enlightenment ideals of tolerance, individualism and utility. In their celebrations of ethnic pluralism and correlative denunciation of older versions of Australian Euro-inclined identity and affiliation, these De-Orientalists seem satisfied with the official government position and the new pleadings of Australian business. These De-Orientalists deflect the concerns of Hall, Harvey or Lipietz about the diminution or loss of ‘difference’ through capitalist integration, envisaging a celebration that would facilitate the harmonious passage of Australia into its region — all the world’s a food hall.

These two versions of De-Orientalism are united in their ethnic celebrationism, their limited capacity for dealing with flux and change, and their tendency to veer away both from their own precarious theoretical foundations and the often contradictory specificities of transcultural and transnational interaction. Nevertheless, De-Orientalism, particularly Said’s sophisticated adaptation of poststructuralism, has proved extremely useful in alerting us to the ideological and heuristic deficiencies of Imperialist thinking. However, in assuming the status of a new orthodoxy, most particularly as it sheds the complexity of the poststructuralist theoretic, the ‘idea’ of Orientalism has itself become essentialized, even ossified, as it has become institutionalised in critical
investigation. This type of 'deconstruction', specifically in relation to Australian representation of itself and South East Asia, must necessarily rarefy and reduce texts according to specific analytical and ideological strictures. Poststructuralism itself has highlighted the problems associated with this hermeneutic process — the reconstitution of a secondary text as interpretation. Nevertheless, the crude application of the De-Orientalist critical-ideological perspective reduces texts to a monochromatic interpretation. Complexity and contradiction are rarefied, if not banished altogether, and the works under study remain as skeletal and pilloried examples of racism, jingoism and xenophobia; the protagonists of Koch, d'Alpuget, Drewe, Weir, Duigan and Noyce maraud about the South East Asian countryside, exploiting its citizens and re-instituting White European cultural, racial, sexual and economic supremacy. Thus the re-writing of the archive often proves little more than a 're-torturing' of the language and imagery of contemporary texts in order to make them conform to the De-Orientalist project, a history of goodies and baddies.

Given Said's disavowal of the European voice and its capacity to represent legitimately the non-European and non-metropolitan experience in any circumstance, it is not surprising that those De-Orientalists who so breathlessly attend their mentor's proclamations should so enthusiastically condemn Australian narratizations of South East Asia. However, this reading of Australian subjectivities and culture fails once again to comprehend adequately those countervailing and often competing perspectives which give the text its internal and formal complexity. Little attention, for example, is paid to the anti-imperialist perspectives which inform and confound many of the Australian characters who live, work, love and often 'subvert' in South East Asia. The De-Orientalists tend to retreat from the precariousness of power, identity and culture as it is represented in a range of recent transcultural Australian texts, preferring to view these instabilities as further manifestations of what Suvendrini Perera calls 'Orientalist anxieties' — as though anxiety were the epitome of political and moral infamy. Like Said, Perera and other De-Orientalists would condemn the Anglo-Australian to silence; the voice of the postcolonised peoples of the world, whatever the alterations to the global cartography, is now an exclusion zone. Only the ethnically privileged are able to speak with genuine insight and political legitimacy of the transcultural condition.

While the work of Said and his followers has been important in adapting some of the poststructuralist tenets, most especially in exposing the ideological assumptions of historical discourses, it has tended paradoxically to reconstruct the sort of macro-teleology and essentialism that poststructuralism has generally tried to dismantle. Thus, 'Australia' is conceived in relation to the dialectics of Centres, Althusserian ideologies, imperialist domination, and neo-colonial materialist exploitation. A more productive approach would attempt to examine the
complexities, contradictions and instabilities of textual and discursive conceits — those elements of nation, culture and subjectivity which Foucault examines as the microphysics of power. Such an alternative examination of Australian transcultural communication would avoid monadic teleological and ideological contrivances, treating the precariousness of power and culture as inevitable and not necessarily damnable. Such an approach would render its own analysis and discursive production more sensitive to the interaction and multiple-flows of difference and similarity, specificity and collectivity, distance and propinquity. It would take seriously questions of ideology and inequity, preferring however to treat power in the Foucaultian sense of process and exchange, a matter of instability rather than structure and fixity. Such an approach would facilitate a more personal and personalized investigation without a retreat to idealizations and ideological formulae which tend to rarefy communication processes by shedding the intimacies of detail.

Tourism on the Indonesian island of Bali exemplifies how this alternative Australia Asia might be conceived and understood, most particularly as it relates to the context of the global postmodern and those transcultural communicative exchanges which demand shifts, realignments and readjustments in textual and interpersonal conceits. Bali, which is visited by over half a million international tourists each year — half of whom are Australian — has become a favoured site for direct and textual, extraterritorial experiences. Adrian Vickers defines these experiences in terms of what he calls ‘the created paradise’; the discourse which articulates the actual space of Bali produces its symbols and meanings for holiday-makers, cultural adventurers and distant observers. Texts as different as Phil Noyce’s film *Echoes of Paradise,* Gerard Lee’s novel *Troppo Man,* Nigel and Caron Krauth’s novel *Sin Can Can,* Inez Baranay’s novel *The Edge of Bali* and Glenda Adams’ story ‘Letters from Jogja’ concern themselves with the impact of mass tourism and most particularly the cultural exchange processes which are bringing such significant changes to the island and the ‘integrity’ of its traditions. A conventional De-Orientalist approach might be concerned with the ‘appropriation’ of the traditional culture by the Australo-Western commercial and cultural hegemonies, regarding the narratization of Bali as part of the continuing resonance of imperialism. Nevertheless, the fictional texts themselves raise the issue of neo-imperialism and the effects of mass tourism as they engage their characters in the ongoing dialogue about tourism, globalization and the impact of cultural interaction, change and hybridization. These issues are not easily resolved, and even in a novel like Inez Baranay’s *The Edge of Bali,* which promotes a strident, even didactic, De-Orientalist sympathy, the complexity of the personal relationships between the characters tends to dismantle simple conclusions.
Thus, in the alternative analytical paradigm it is not simply a matter of the marauding Australian character imagining the Asian person, culture or context and expropriating whatever he or she wishes; rather, the Australian visitor interacts with his or her physical and cultural environment and is inevitably changed by that communion. The Australian protagonist is not a cultural marauder, as Annette Hamilton suggests of Noyce's Maria, but is confronted, challenged to the very centre of his or her cultural being, dislodged, affected, changed in some fundamental way even as she or he returns to the security and familiarity of the 'home' culture. In fact, the transcultural experience tends to dissolve the distance, absoluteness and separateness of those categories and oppositions which are so essential to De-Orientalist analysis: self-other, home-abroad, Australia-Indonesia, centre-margin, East-West, imagined-real, identity-difference. It is not that they vanish entirely, but rather that they are challenged from within and without by the new vocabulary of transcultural communication. Indeed, the Bali texts — including Noyce's film — incorporate a perspective which seriously challenges the primacy and stability of the home culture. If 'return' is inevitable, it is a return steeped in ambiguity and a recognition that the home culture (indeed all culture) is elusive and at least potentially reproachable.

Such questioning of the home culture is often expressed in these texts, for example, in the distinction drawn between ethical (travelling) and mass tourism. Thus, with the notable exception of Gerard Lee's *Troppo Man*,

all of these Bali texts tend to contrast a more spiritually, culturally and often sexually contiguous interaction against the superficialities of mass tourism which offends as it changes and which tends to be practised by the hordes. Certainly Hamilton and others might well regard such a distinction as merely disingenuous, yet a careful reading of the Bali fictions indicates some serious artistic and ideological intent; the protagonist is in fact being profoundly altered or 'hybridized' by the experience of propinquity. The tourist characters who skate across the surface are questioned by those other characters who are prepared to surrender claims to cultural primacy and who immerse themselves more thoroughly in the intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual or sensual pleasures of transcultural communion.

In all the texts there is a recognition that the individual Australian must change and adapt, and that ultimately interaction will produce its effects of hybridization. Even those more commercially directed and popular texts which use the context of Bali to embellish their standard discursive vernacular are inevitably participants in the cultural hybridization process. The Garuda-Elle Macpherson Bali promotion project is an example of a transnational co-operative capitalist venture which has produced a distinctly hybridized cultural artefact. The images of the Bali-Elle calendar, featuring Elle in a range of European, American and Australian fashions, constitute precisely that new discourse described by Jean Baudrillard as
the floating signifier — a rootless image/meaning that projects new ways of conceiving reality. Unfortunately there has been little work done on this sort of imaging in Australia. Rather, analysts have been content to view cultural artefacts like the Elle-Garuda calendar as ideological debauchery, an example of exploitation of the woman and the Third World context.

In defending them against the monadic assaults of the De-Orientalists, I would not claim for these texts some unequivocal moral or ideological virtue. Quite the contrary, since what is interesting about these texts is the internal tensions and ambiguities which parallel the broader complexities in transcultural communication and the phenomenon we popularly call the global postmodern. Perhaps one final example of the alternative version of Australia/Asia communication relationship might serve to conclude this discussion. During a recent visit to Bali, my four year old daughter was invited to model children's clothing for a major French fashion magazine. I had some misgivings but the decency of the production team, the enthusiasm of my daughter and my own curiosity elicited my consent. On the third day of the shoot, taking place in a verdant riverside location near Ubud, the art director decided to include a local child in some of the photographs. This he thought would add to the ambience and authenticity of some of the photographs. Being the only Bahasa speaker in the group, I was sent away with a piece of string dutifully knotted at my daughter's height. I asked around at a nearby village and returned with the head man, a few kids and an entourage of encouraging on-lookers. The production crew conferred and a girl, Putu, was chosen. This was high entertainment and the crowd hooted merrily as Putu was handed across to Charlotte and Karin, the wardrobe and make-up artists. It was a truly Pygmalion transformation. Putu was divested of the grubby, torn dress. She was washed in the river, clipped and combed and re-dressed in the pristine Parisian clothing. Fine velvet shoes were placed on her feet and a sky-blue Mickey Mouse band was placed in her hair. Yet as I watched Putu going through her poses, following the instructions with such filial goodwill, I found myself being gripped by a strange mixture of pleasure and horror. The villagers too had fallen silent. Their gaiety had dissolved and their eyes were now fixed in a cool and expressionless stare. My own daughter had been surprised, delighted and a little confused by these events: by the clothes, the cameras and the attention. But for Putu the journey must have seemed more extraordinary; postmodernity was charioting her, it seemed to me, beyond the reckoning of her friends and family, beyond perhaps the dominions of her own fantasies. Paris was not a point on a map or an emblem observed in the visage of a passing tourist bus; Paris was a sensation that was dissolving with such breathless ease the identity and knowing that had previously been the young girl's universe.

It is likely that the Australian De-Orientalists would find considerable offence in the event, pointing perhaps to the First Worlders' neo-
imperialist exploitation of the native Balinese child for their own aesthetic and commercial gratifications. Worse still, Putu was being treated as a commodity, an exotic backdrop, an alien ‘other’, by which the centralized figure of the (blonde-haired, blue-eyed and slightly Frenchified) Australian child could be known and experienced as ‘self’. But such a reading would, as I have suggested above, seriously reduce the complex interflow of connections, interconnections and transcultural processes which produced the final image and symbol of this strange convergence of people and cultures. This was not the assault of the Foreign Legion or the spirit of Kokoda. Each of us, whatever our ethical or ideological reservations, was a willing participant in the international capitalist game. Each of us was free enough to choose commodification and its rewards in pleasure — even Putu. In the context of the global postmodern we came together for some brief time; we shifted and changed our language, our behaviour, our expectations, our culture, and achieved a temporary but not inconsequential communion.

I have no way of telling what sorts of lasting effects might issue from this relatively unspectacular and ephemeral convergence. The image of the two children, published in the 1994 European summer catalogue, was a contrivance, a piece of theatrical advertising. What is clear, however, is that such imagery is part of the onward march of the postmodern era, and that the theory and ideology of cultural separationism — which is itself effecting a new way of writing our own national heritage — cannot afford to neglect its implications. In fact, cultural analysis generally, with its significant potential for theorizing and investigating ‘difference’, must confront honestly the contradictions and interflows which are especially extant in transcultural communication. We certainly must account for and where necessary challenge differentials in power. However, we cannot permit this dimension of the postmodern project blind us to other connections and communions. Thus, it is not that the constellation of cultures, histories and individuals that produced the photographs for the French fashion catalogue could dissolve or even suspend those multiplying and contending powers since, as Foucault reminds us, power is inevitable and everywhere. Yet nor is it enough to content ourselves with a description of power that fixes relative positions in a teleological superstructure: we ought not, that is, ‘conceive of a world divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one’.

Rather, the starting point for cultural and transcultural analysis should be the multiple and contradictory flows that have, and continue to determine our history. Our re-writing of the archive and our imagining of ourselves and our region need to account for and incorporate images like those of the two children; it must ask more compelling questions about discourse, globalism and communication as it reaches behind monadic teleological and ideological definitions.
By the completion of the Ubud shoot that day everyone had seemed modestly satisfied. The production team were happy with their photographs, the villagers had had their entertainment, and Putu’s family had received an unexpected financial boon. My daughter and I joined the cattle handlers for a swim in the river and we talked about what had happened and what it all meant. As we talked we both waved to Putu who was leading a train of young admirers along the track toward the rice fields. The sun was setting and Putu was back in her bare feet and the dirty dress. In one hand she carried a can of Coke and in the other a half eaten chocolate bar. In her hair she still wore the sky-blue Mickey Mouse band which the production crew had given her as a memento.

NOTES

1. There is of course considerable debate over Foucault’s definition of ‘discontinuity’. Mark Poster (1989) suggests that Foucault’s use and development of the concept is largely rooted in Foucault’s desire to distinguish his own historiography — archaeology and genealogy — from conventional Marxist teleology. In either case, Foucault’s major historical writings in the middle period of his work (esp. Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality Volume One) demonstrate his interest in broad historical patterns as well as the ‘microphysics’ of historical detail.


9. Bronowski also includes in her criticism female writers like Blanche d’Alpuget whose two major works set in the region, Turtle Beach (1981) and Monkeys in the Dark (1980), explore the cross national sexual affairs of two Australian women. In a relatively superficial analysis Bronowski considers d’Alpuget’s heroines to be comparable to the male heroes of Koch and Robert Drewe — the action of the novels is driven by Australian sexual adventurism while the exotica of Asia merely provides a convenient background. See Bronowski, pp. 181-185.


indigenous word for Asian or Asia, though they do have words for their own national type. Gehrnann would do well to read Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* which of course points out that the concept of nation and the language which gives it form are both relatively new. Indonesia’s sense of nation is particularly recent, as indeed is the national language which has no word for Asian or Asia. Gehrnann seems also unaware of the fact that Indonesia and our other regional neighbours do use the words such as Asia, Asian and the West; they do have a regional consciousness (cf ASEAN) as well as other internationalist or collective propensities (cf Mahatir’s Islamic consciousness).

13. Mares, p. 75 (Mares’ parentheses).
15. Shaw, p.36.
16. Shaw, p.36.
22. John Docker makes a similar point in his discussion of Australia’s academic and cultural journals. According to Docker, there is a prevailing ideology which now excludes any ideas that do not conform to precepts like ‘pluralism’ and ‘multiculturalism’. See Docker, John, ‘The Temperament of Editors and a New Multicultural Orthodoxy’, *Island*, 48, Spring (1991) 50-55.
23. I have pursued these issues at length in my doctoral thesis, ‘The Blind Puppeteer: Australia Indonesia Communication in the Postmodern Context,’ RMIT, Melbourne. All of these analyses rely on the theoretical foundations of poststructuralism. They will all make claims about the nature and character of representation of Asia by Australian media and fictionalists. Most will go on to argue that these images are distorted, inaccurate or bear no resemblance to the reality. However, other than some oblique references to specificity, none of these writers give us a clear definition or description of this reality. Indeed, even Said himself, who is far more theoretically aware than many of his Australian followers, is guilty of this kind of slippage.
25. I would include the writings of Homi Bhabha, Chakravorty Spivak and a number of those writing for *Screen*. Bhabha, in fact, is quite hostile toward those who have reduced Lacan’s conceits into simple polemical constructs of self and other. This tends to be the approach of many of the Australian cultural commentators discussed in this paper. See various discussions in Homi Bhabha, ed., *Identity: The Real Me*


27. I have no wish to pursue these various interpretations. See, Peter Putnis's discussion of the term and its evolution in 'Constructing Multiculturalism: Political and Popular Discourse', Australian Journal of Communication, 16 (1989) pp. 165-72.


30. Hall, p.33. In fact, Hall regards the global postmodern with some suspicion. He asks the question whether the global postmodern and international capital have marked themselves as history's final arbiters. The only true resistance to the embrace of globalization, Hall finally contends, resides in the real voice of ethnic liberation. Once again, Hall retreats to the liberationary voice of the marginalized and diasporic of the world. Only here, it seems, and not in the cosmopolitan cuisines of the West, can true opposition be found.


33. See articles already cited by Mares, Bronowski and Garnaut.

34. In adapting Derrida's original analytical paradigm, these 'postcolonial' deconstructionists have really reconstructed a version of truth and reality that Derrida would not accept. See Jeff Lewis (1994) The Blind Puppeteer, doctoral thesis, RMIT, Chapter 2.


37. This film was originally to be shot in Bali but political difficulties led to its relocation to the Thai tourist resort of Phuket. The Bali connection was retained, however, in the character of Ra, the Balinese dancer who has lost his tatsu, or magical dancing spirit. The relocation in fact tends to intensify the themes of cultural estrangement and cultural communion; these significant issues are entirely overlooked by Annette Hamilton's reading of the text.


39. See Hamilton.

40. Lee's comic novel does in fact distinguish between different types of tourism,
though he seems to be quite suspicious of many of the pretensions of 'ethical' or 'spiritual' tourism.

Sarah and James were a fine, well-suited couple. Through all the many years they lived together it never once entered their minds that they would separate. Eventually, however, they began, slowly, tentatively, to discuss the idea of marriage.

At first it struck them that everyone was doing it. As a social trend in their peer group, marriage must therefore enter their conversations. And somehow the topic moved onto the personal plane. But they’d never wanted to be like everyone else anyway.

Once raised, marriage was not so easily dismissed. Marriage was a public demonstration of their commitment to each other. But their private love was surely the only bond necessary. Marriage was the ticket to greater clarity and ease in the legal world of society’s institutions. But the law was becoming more mindful of less conventional liaisons. Marriage would please their parents. But they should act for their own fulfilment now they were mature adults, not children. Marriage would be a firm foundation for their own children. But, did they want children?

In every debate on why to marry there was no conclusion. So why marry? Yet, Sarah and James kept coming back to: why not?

The Wedding Day was set. Sarah took a girlfriend into town and bought a gorgeous white dress. An upmarket caterer was contacted, a limousine booked, the invitations, gilt-edged, printed. Oh, and they arranged the ceremony with the priest at the local church too.

It was a busy, and actually quite an exciting time. Dinner conversations were filled with preparations and expectations. Sarah had never looked so beautiful. A golden glow radiated from her as she sat at the kitchen table scratching out endless seating plans for the reception.

‘Oh dear, we can't have David and Angie on the same side of the room, not since the divorce’ she laughed, scratching, rearranging, again and again.

To her it was just one wonderful party, thought James, with an edge of bitterness. He knew he loved her beyond anything, but Sarah seemed more interested in the wedding than the marriage. Come to think of it, she hadn’t argued too strenuously through the months of debate. Did she love him as much as he loved her? As James watched the seating plan come together, he was filled with doubt.
They were sitting at the same kitchen table when James said quite calmly, "I'm sorry Sarah, I don't know why I did it, it was only once and it does not affect my love for you. But I was unfaithful."

Sarah smiled. James was always joking around, and if the topic was somewhat questionable, so were most of his pranks. The laughter became nervous as her lover confessed to no jest, only infidelity.

'Who, who?' she gasped, trying to pin the evil down.

Sarah screamed and Sarah sobbed. James held her tight and James was rammed into the night. Anger gave way to sorrow which rose to rage that exploded in disbelief. The shrapnel of her words hurt her as much as they did him.

His only defense was: "I'm sorry."

How she could continue to live in the knowledge of such treachery astonished Sarah. In a motel room on the coast, suicide fought with a huge history of common sense. And she didn't want to die because she wanted to be around to hurt him as much as he'd hurt her. James opened the door on her return and instead of hurling anger she was so glad to see her best friend. The pain grew and grew, festering in an open sore of distress, but evening followed day, and night was spent in his arms. It scared her. How lonely she would be without him.

Fury and savage, impotent horror and pure dismay shuddered to the surface of her days in the time that followed. Nobody could see her wounds, but she was stabbed by the betrayal, like a butterfly pinned to blotting paper. She struggled, but each movement only hurt her more, ripping the wings that once flew. It was better to be still. The silence of the damned? The quiet of defeat? No, the stillness of forgiveness.

Sarah put James' betrayal down to pre-wedding jitters.

The wedding went ahead in every planned detail. All their friends celebrated and were truly happy, for James and Sarah were the perfect couple. James and Sarah too were happy, snuggled together in the honeymoon suite.

'I'm glad it turned out like this' sighed James. 'I was scared you did not really love me. I wasn't unfaithful, I could never do that to you. I just wanted to see if you would stay with me through good times and bad, if you would love me for better and for worse. Thank you for being true. I love you Sarah.'

James was surprised to find Sarah gone from the bed next morning. Nor was she at home sulking. In fact, all her personal belongings were missing too. She had not even left a note.
Charlotte Clutterbuck

PELICANS AT WOY WOY

Thirteen years ago,
we sat on this grass and ate the last
of our wedding feast.
Pelicans waddled on the shore,
awkward as I felt under the strain;
the water lapped against the boat,
we pushed off and weathered our first storm.

Today we walk again under the coral trees,
the children practise cartwheels
as the dog scoots round them,
and the pelicans, still as plaster gnomes,
stand on the posts at the end of the pier,
waiting for scraps from the fish and chip shop.

These two days are cobbled together
by years of undarned socks,
washed shirts, quarrels and makings up.
I read your *War and Peace* in Istanbul;
in Yorkshire, you dragged me, pregnant, up a hill
Towards a Roman road –

shared times, two children and a dog,
and our return to where we both belong
tie up our heartstrings in a granny knot.
We sit on the wall along the beach,
a parcel of fish and chips is on our knees,
pelicans skim the dusk-still reach,
and rise above the trees.
LIVE ACTION

Scatterbrained –
- tissues dropping from her pockets
- errands forgotten,
- dark hair knotted up all anyhow
- in a shocking pink bow,
- a wet season trip round the Top End
- in a clapped-out Mazda.

She stitches spangled velvet,
- dawn or midnight silk
to cloak her dreams;
in her video clips a woman
lithe as a panther
dances with a newspaper man –

she flies at life like a bird of paradise.

LOVE AMONG THE GUMBOOTS

If I'd known you were coming, I'd have washed my face.
When I hear the gate,
- my heart, like Joseph's staff, bursts into flower.
Knees covered with mud, dust in my hair,
I bring you tea and we sit on the back steps
among the saddles, gumboots, lifting nails,
close enough for me to catch your scent,
for you to sniff the reek of leeks
I have plucked for you from my garden.

I know you care only that I make you laugh –
we fit together like a pair of well-worn shoes.
MOTION ARRESTED

If I could always be in this painting, slip out of the rush of children, garden sprouting weeds, roof leaking, money tight, writing, washing up, teaching, the blank stares of undergraduates... follow the servants who jostle through the door to peer at the surrender of three kings – brocades, the golden spurs, the chains, the furs, tamed, motion arrested by reverence.

Not a word is spoken, Joseph stands dumbly to one side in wooden clogs. Her face still virgin under the linen veil, not yet warned by the crucifix on the shattered stable wall. The baby stares, naked, sideways at me – as if I should work to ease his poverty.
It didn’t have to come out.
It could have stayed as a dull obstruction behind my sternum,
a globule of pain and purpose,
helping give form to the weak mists of my body,
and at the end, nibbled bare by time. But instead

I pushed it out.

I wanted it to be a burnished silver ball, blithe and powerful,
perfectly formed and compelling,
lustrous and valuable. But instead

It was a common old cracked-glass tombola,
rough, chestnut-shaped,
sad and heartfelt, dull and unappetising.

I wanted it to alight smoothly from my lips,
both question and answer,
a handsome fait accompli. But instead

It caught in my throat,
I gagged, and it surged into my lap.
I turned to catch it, but fumbled;

I tried to cover it over and make little of it -
doing so was like crushing a naughty pet underfoot, like
burning a poem because of a glimpsed frown;

I shuffled it lightly away with my toe, skimmed it into the redbrown
shadows -
doing so was like dropping a thousand dollars on the street and being
too glum and flustered to pick it up again.

It may have been the best part of me,
it could have been -
this dumb thing from inside my chest,
But I disowned it in a rush
of agony and liberation,
shame and transcendence,
soul’s preservation,
heart’s incineration.

The pressure released, my body flooded with toxins.
I trembled with ghastly cold, for a while
may have died. But instead

I lived - and now, dusty, dry, almost invisible, I convalesce.
And I find high comfort in remaking myself, growing towards
the last and greatest human goal,
The end of hope.

CLEAN BREAK

She should have known it was over,
That it had to be finished, at
That moment, right here.
It must have been clear,
From the second I took
My position - a stance
That, surely, heralded
What was
To come

There was a momentary shock,
I couldn’t just release her, or
Easily let her drop. I would
Have to push. Lean
Forward, then
Push carefully,
Delicately.

So I kept firm control of the situation.
I had already closed off my feelings.
But she stood up hard; I felt a twinge
And briefly moaned against the dark
Ache within, then twisted expertly
To accommodate it. And I saw that
It could have gone either way here.
I clasped her cold, white shoulders.
Not to squeeze, that was the trick -
No Rorschach bruise as remembrance.
Instead, to bear down - logical, strong
But gentle - without overstretching
Credibility, tearing the membrane
Of inevitability. Short sigh.
Hold. A breath.
Hold. She’s
Gone.

Suddenly, so suddenly
Part of the past’s
Murky soup.
Her scent
Teases
Tears.

I sense the cost of the break -
That I’ve now squeezed
Closed inside:
A dark cave
In a white
Box.

The future, though, is clear.
Now, then, I can rise,
Purged, towards
It.

Now I feel
Release,
Rel-
ease.

THAT WORD

I spoke that word, that word, the other day -
like forgetting to say ‘the Scottish play,’
or ‘Break a leg.’ Like slipping
on the rubbly hill-paths near my home,
and peeling a crescent of shoe-leather from the toe.
I'd ignored the thing for years, pushed it off when it nuzzled me. I pinched its nose, just where it hurts - 'Fuck off' - then smeared its snot across my pants. I kicked it out from underfoot, then caught it humping the back of my leg, its penis-head dabbing like lipstick.

I couldn’t let it in. It would leave curly orange piles, neat and unspeakable to blister my carpet, cooling into putrid, dusty rubble. It would smother me in my bed, or fart me awake, wipe strands of sleep from its eyes onto my collar. If I squeezed it, it would vomit on my clothes.

Then the other day I lay at the bottom of a mineshaft on my back, bones poking through my jeans. A floppy ear and a snuffle bent the white circle into a crescent. A clatter of rubble and dust blinded me. 'Help me.' And then I said it, I said it, that word. And now, I feel my feet and face being weakly licked. I manage to stroke its naked fur. The white light grows closer every day.
Each century seems to have its own interpellative dream-text: *The Tempest* for the 17th century; *Robinson Crusoe* for the 18th century; *Jane Eyre* for the 19th century; *Heart of Darkness* for the turn of this century. Such texts serve as pre-texts to others; they underwrite them. Yet, in its nearly four centuries of existence, *The Tempest* has washed ashore more alluvial debris than any other text: parodies, rewritings and adaptations of all kinds. Incessantly, we keep revisiting the stage of Shakespeare’s island and we continue to dredge up new meanings from its sea-bed.

The true *anagnorisis* for Alonso, the King of Naples, but not for us in Prospero’s play, which is not to be confused with *The Tempest*, was the discovery of Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess behind a curtain. Since then, the curtain has been lifted again and again, revealing different chess-players. What pawns can still be moved across this *fin-de-siècle* chessboard, when all strategic moves have seemingly been exhausted. ‘What next I wonder?’ could then be the question the blasé post-deconstructionist critic is bound to ask at the end of this millennium. ‘What next I wonder?’ is also the question that the Prospero-like Charles Arrowby asks at the end of *The Sea, the Sea*, after realizing that he has been ‘reading (his) own dream-text’.2 If one recalls the Latin etymology of the name Miranda, ‘to be wondered at’, this question could playfully be reread as ‘What next Miranda?’ The Bardscript has indeed been rewritten from Caliban’s and Prospero’s perspective in various postcolonial and postmodern texts.3 It is now high time to decode the message in the bottle, which Miranda may have hurriedly scribbled while her paranoid father Prospero was busy with more important conspiracies. In its feminist import, Marina Warner’s *Indigo* (1992) provides the Daughter’s plot and thus forces a reconsideration of the doubly colonized subject – woman.4

Admittedly, in Shakespeare’s text, with the exception of Miranda, possibly the harpy and the deities presiding over the fertility masque, women are conspicuously absent from the play.5 Claribel is married off to
the ruler of Tunis (II.1.99-100; H.D. will rehabilitate Claribel in 1949); Ferdinand is motherless; Miranda has no siblings and the Dryden-Davenant question in *The Enchanted Island* (1667) – ‘Miranda, Where is your sister?’ – is therefore somewhat pointless. Nautical metaphors, starting with Gonzalo’s reference to the sinking vessel as a ‘leaky ... unstanchéd wench’ (I.i.7), further contribute to the quasi-mysogynistic tone of the play.

To top it all, Miranda’s mother, though ‘a piece of virtue’ (I.2.56), is absent from all memories; so is inevitably Prospero’s wife who, with the fading crossbar of the ‘f’ in the earliest copies of the folio, has become ‘wise’.6 Although Sycorax is the absent Other in many ways (she conveniently dies, leaving behind her son Caliban and her servant Ariel), this fellow-outcast is insistently on Prospero’s mind. *Indigo* thus retrieves Prospero’s female memory as Sycorax as well as provides the ‘great unwritten story’, by which Adrienne Rich meant ‘the cathexis between mother and daughter’, so absent in Shakespeare.7 It is also somewhat logical that the companion-piece to Warner’s *The Lost Father* (1988) should be a quest for the lost mother of infancy. In *Indigo*, womanhood is split into a matriarchal unholy Trinity: Ariel-Sycorax-Miranda.

Miranda is the great-granddaughter to Sir ‘Ant’ Everard, who is the ancestor to ‘Kit’ Everard who first landed on Liamuiga in 1618, the Caribbean island where Sycorax used to rule as a renowned sorceress and an indigo dyer. The plot oscillates between ‘then’ in Liamuiga in 1600 and ‘now’, with Miranda and her parents, Kit and Astrid Everard, ‘storm-tossed’ and ‘marooned’ in the London tube in the 1960s, where a Caliban-esque guard takes them to his underground lair on a foggy night.

With its double temporal perspective (20th-century and Elizabethan), *Indigo* conjures up Virginia Woolf’s *Voyage Out* (1915), which relates a young woman’s (Rachel Vinrace’s) journey to South America on her father’s ship, which remains grammatically feminine throughout. Woolf’s ‘figurehead to some Elizabethan barque’ (deleted in the final draft)8 prefigures that Miranda will be at the helm some day. It also intimates that the Ur-Tempest was a female text. The structure of Woolf’s novel shows, however, that ‘little progress in the condition of women had been made in the three hundred years which separated the early twentieth-century from the Elizabethan age’ (Fox, 84). Of Warner’s three ‘islanded’ women, Miranda alone will safely lay up her barque and embrace the ‘brave new world’ of marriage and its proffered independence. By contrast, her ‘sister-aunt’, Xanthe, a sort of Barbie doll version of Miranda, will drown in her only ‘voyage out’ in the mapped waters of the Caribbean basin.

Concomitant with ‘mapping the waters’ (which provides the subtitle to *Indigo*) are the twin notions of conquest and virginity, already present in accounts, compiled by Hakluyt at the end of the 16th century, of Raleigh’s quest for El Dorado and Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe.

From then on, the *terra incognita* became a woman, a passive, ovula-like island to be assaulted, raped by seminal invaders. As the rape motif in the now famous passage from *The Tempest* (I.2.331-351) connects Miranda’s ‘honour’ and Caliban’s island, Miranda’s lot seems to be linked to that of ‘the freckled whelp’. Warner will see to it that the ‘two victims of Prosperity’, as Donaldson aptly calls them (68), somehow meet at the end in an unprecedented fashion.

Marina Warner has variously dipped into her ‘bowls of colours’ (the phrase is from Czeslaw Milosz in the epigraph to *The Lost Father*); the book is therefore divided into six parts along colour lines from ‘Lilac/Pink’ (with the birth of Xanthe’s Miranda) to ‘Maroon/Black’ (with the birth of Miranda’s daughter) and moves through various voices and hues. It is rewarding to read *Indigo* across the colour-spectrum and look for a chronological, chromatic reading, the kind Julio Cortazar had deemed passive and hence female in *Rayuela* (1963; trans. *Hopscotch*) – a reading that somehow rainbow-hazes in this new light.

The book also wavers between two geographical sites: London and Liamuiga. Columbus had earlier on called Liamuiga and its twin-island Oualie St Thomas because of the gashes in their sides that recalled ‘the five wounds of the saviour’; Liamuiga will then become Everhope under Kit Everard’s governorship; then Enfant-Béate (Blessed Child) under French rule, to recover its former name with Independence in the early 1970s. Behind Warner’s map lies, in palimpsestic fashion, Shakespeare’s Elizabethan map of voyaging that spread from the European Continent to a mythical Caribbean island, which was a stone’s throw ‘from the still-ved Bermoothes’ (I.2.229) where the spirit Ariel fetches his precious dew.

Sycorax takes us back to that day in 1600 when, instead of a ‘brave vessel’ dashing to pieces at Prospero’s command (I.2.6-8), a slave-ship throws overboard the battered bodies of some twenty failing slaves during the Middle Passage. Among them is a drowned woman whose brine-filled womb is ballooning out with a baby which Sycorax delivers with an oyster-shell knife. This ‘orphan from the sea’ (96) is Dulé, an African survivor of Igbo origin, who under Sycorax’s tutelage, soon gets acquainted with ‘the qualities o’ th’ isle’ (I.2.337; 104). Dulé’s name is a botched anagram of the French *deuil* that signals his people’s bereavement. This sense of loss and mourning will send him on a quest for his roots (a skyward quest, as it turns out, symbolized by his ascending a ladder, standing on the last rung, free of any support). However, his quest for freedom from the British usurpers ends tragically, as his hamstrings are severed and he thus meets the fate of many a run-away slave or ‘maroon’, after the mountaintops (Sp: *cimarrón*) or jungle enclaves where they sought refuge.

Sycorax’s rescue-operation as well as her *sangai* or ‘preternatural insight and power’ (97) trigger off her repudiation by her husband and her self-
exile in another part of the island; Shakespeare's Sycorax also 'from Argier ... was banished' (I.2.266). There she practises her magic arts and the dyeing of indigo. Between blue and indigo ('Blue/Indigo' is the title of Part II), between blue and the colour purple, the bluish hue that used to signal pregnancy in Shakespeare's time is now pregnant with other meanings. Indigo was one of the plantations' three staples along with tobacco (incidentally an Arawak name) and rice before they were enlarged to cotton and sugar. Significantly, Sycorax, Shakespeare's 'blue-eyed hag' (I.2.269), brews indigo in huge vats and, as a manipulator of colours (local colour included), is closer to the visual artist. Her artistic talents will be resurrected in the contemporary Miranda who uses crayons to paint from vérité photographs.  

Sycorax and Dule are soon joined by a five-year-old Arawak girl, Ariel. Ariel, the delicate spirit and enchanting singer originally enclosed in the 'cloven-pine' by Sycorax (I.2.279) and then conditionally released by Prospero, becomes Sycorax's helper and heir in the art of dyeing and healing. Ariel's legendary androgyny (given a homosexual tinge in the late Derek Jarman's filmic adaptation, 1980) is here tossed to the winds. Ariel grows to be a tall, robust woman, flanked by her gentle and tame caveys, a welcome improvement on the pack of hounds conjured up by Prospero to chase the conspirators and transformed into the theroid hunting dogs trained to mount a human sex in Barbadian George Lamming's Water with Berries (1973).

Ariel and Caliban/Dulé in Warner's novel embody the original Arawak and African 'forced' labour 'needed by the mutation in the land/labour ratio' which followed 'as a result of western Europe's first-phase expansion into the Americas' (Wynter 361). Warner's choice of making Ariel into an Arawak instead of a Carib, for instance, may be explained indirectly by the fact that historians from Du Tertre to Edwards found the Caribs, more than the Arawaks, a highly indomitable and unknowable race. Moreover, the Caribs had literally leapt to their death by hurling themselves over what is now known as 'le Morne des sateurs', in 'one scream of binding lace', as Walcott puts it in 'Another life' (1973). Ariel as an Arawak is therefore a more plausible figure. In Ariel, Warner restores the Native North American subject, who only makes a fleeting appearance, mostly in Canadian texts. The Métis singer in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners (1974) is an Ariel-figure who has an affair with the white Canadian Morag Gunn, a Miranda-figure and a woman-artist, the author of a novel-within-the novel duly entitled Prospero's Child.

Warner's text also probes into this other 'great unwritten story', that of Sycorax and her dealings with Caliban and Ariel before Prospero and Miranda 'here in this island ... arrived' (I.2.171). Sycorax's being 'hither brought with child' (I.2.269) from her original birthplace in Argier (Algiers) also makes her retrospectively the first colonizer of the island. In Indigo, she rules over all of the island's fauna and flora and, after Dulé has
left for richer crabbing grounds, her only human subject is Ariel who, overstuffed with her mother’s nurturing will flee from ‘the motherland’. When Ariel is about Miranda’s age (twelve) in The Tempest, she leaves Sycorax’s saman tree and elects the coconut grove as her new dwelling place. Rather symbolically, it is after a bitter altercation between (foster-) mother and daughter that Kit, the ‘red man’ (139) and unlawful usurper, steps in and sets fire to the tree of their discreet genealogy. In the process, he burns Sycorax, who survives the incident; her burnt carcass will act as a constant reminder to Kit of his brutal landing and his primitive blunt-ness. This baleful insensitivity is also reflected in the indestructible metal the British introduced along with their hefty cannons among a people who had thus far only used conch shell tools.

Soon after he makes his landfall in 1618, the concupiscent Kit starts coveting both the island and Ariel’s body. In typical colonial fashion but also abiding by the tenets of the Renaissance neo-Platonic doctrine, he echoes Amerigo Vespucci who ‘noted with surprise that the women of the New World were often beautiful despite their natural (i.e. libidinous) ways, he suspected this moral ugliness to be reflected in their physical features’. He then masturbates to the rhythm of religious incantations (like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, he has an Intended at home) until he surrenders to his loins and impregnates the grown Ariel. Kit’s masturbation, which finds a muffled echo in the Onan episodes in the Québécois Pierre Seguin’s Caliban (1977), builds on Ferdinand’s submerged fantasies of rape in The Tempest. Unlike Ferdinand, however, Kit’s ‘honour’ will definitely ‘melt/ ... into lust’ and he will inexorably break her ‘virgin-knot’ (IV.i.27).

Their progeny – Roukoubé (Red Bear Cub) – is a hybrid, the result of a transgressive choice that will be resurrected in Sir Anthony Everard’s first marriage in the 1920s to the Creole Estelle Desjours, which then explains the fact that our contemporary Miranda has ‘a touch of the tar brush’ from her grandmother’s Creole blood (39). The book is full of such rehearsals and resurrections that link the generations beyond blood ti(d)es, across time and space.

Ariel’s ‘collaboration’ with the white man reminds us of the obsequious bootlicking and Uncle Tom-like patience of the Ariel of Césaire’s play, Une tempête (1969). But it is here rendered with feminist compassion for the woman caught between the (s)mothering of Sycorax and the new-found sexual power she holds over the white man. She is indeed ‘split in two’, as Warner puts it (152), enacting the Elizabethan fairies and sprites’ capacity to be ‘split in twain’ before getting whole again. Ariel was often held as the third, intermediate figure mediating, negotiating between the polarities of Master and Slave. In Warner’s text, Ariel moves between two sources of power – Kit and Sycorax, both exacting rulers enthralled to their passion for her, and prefers free-floating, as she does in the sulfuric waters at the Hot Springs (134). She later regrets such lack of commitment
and when she makes the move to join Dulé in the struggle against the British, it is too late and she is made captive again.

Kit’s passion for Ariel, made ‘cross’ by her magic herbs and condiments, recalls similar liaisons in other climes. Like Warner’s Ariel, John Gabriel Stedman’s mulatto maid Joanna, nurtured him in sickness and bare him a son; her charms and virtues run through Stedman’s Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Suriname (1796) which, according to George Lang, set many of the terms for the exotic nineteenth-century image of the Creole woman. Unlike this literate soldier who justified the propriety of his love for Joanna by quoting Horace’s poem to Phocius – ‘let not my Phocius think it shame/For a fair slave to own his flame’, Kit does not find Horace much of a comfort, for neither his God – a most demanding Judeo-Christian deity – nor his King, James I, would allow such justification.

Warner also recounts in an interview the story of ‘Thomas Warner, who was the first settler of the island of St. Kitts in 1623, was made Governor of the West Indies by the King of England, and was married to a local woman’. But a more likely source for the Kit-Ariel relationship is to be found in the story of Pocahontas, to which Peter Hulme devotes a whole chapter in his Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797, which Marina Warner acknowledges as a source for Indigo. Pocahontas is the daughter of the Algonquian Chief Powhatan, who ruled over what was to be called Virginia. Pocahontas married an Englishman and took a Christian name, Rebecca, which is the name Marina Warner gives to both Kit’s ship and his English Intended, Rebecca Clovelly, the daughter to the Lord who sponsors his colonizing venture. Hulme comments that ‘Rebecca will give birth to two nations, a red and a white, and the red will despise his birthright and sell it for a mess of pottage’ (Hulme, 145-146). The story of Ariel’s baby Roukoube, which is to Warner ‘the kernel of Indigo’, best embodies the suppressed history of miscegenation, ‘of the intermarriage of the early colonists (which) is never told’ (Interview).

From what we do know, however, Indian women were used by American, but most notoriously, by Canadian voyageurs as sexual receptacles and/or factotums, as Lang argues, but they also provided these cultural renegades or Überlauffer with their immediate knowledge of Amerindian languages – ‘these were the native women the earliest coureur de bois took as country wives, and quickly had as mothers’. Ariel will indeed teach Kit how to tend indigo plants and will show him, as Caliban did with his guest Prospero, ‘the qualities o’ th’ isle’ but will learn English from him. Conversely, Kit will not learn the language of Sycorax’s people, which is never identified. All in all, Warner’s nuanced portrayal of Ariel is a far cry from the typical Indian woman of colonial narratives under the double yoke of colonial and sexual exploitation; Ariel and Kit’s relationship is here wrought with ambiguity and interracial curiosity. The issue of language epitomized in Caliban’s original curse – ‘You taught me language,
and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse’ (I.2.363-364) – is also given another twist, as the crippled Dulé picks up Sycorax’s railing and ranting but acquires a ‘dream language’ when effortlessly swimming in the marine landscape where his troubled eyesight matches the blurriness of the deep.

Then suddenly we are in the U.K. in 1960, the year of independence for most African nation-states. The grown Miranda meets on a film set in London a Black actor, George Felix, whose ‘stagey rage’ (255) is somewhat abated during their one-time affair. Her life in London (with a brief episode in Paris at the hotel Davenant, after the co-author of The Echanted Island) is interrupted in 1969 by Xanthe a.k.a. Goldie, who wishes to go to Enfant-Béate for the 350th Anniversary of the historical landing. Xanthe thereby hopes to escape the tutelage of her ‘Poppa’, Sir ‘Ant’ Everard, an autocratic father who dreams of having her ‘under lock and key ... for ever’ (314) and who, as a former Flinders champion, embodies the absolute interrelatedness between cricket, Englishness and colonialism.

Xanthe (in Greek, the gilded one) marries Sy, ‘the first (man) that ev’r (she) sighed for’ (I.2.447-48). This ‘fat knight’ (327), whose ‘very small, albino mouse pink genitals’ (286) are in inverse ratio to his huge, neo-colonial mapping plans, aims to prove V.S. Naipaul wrong, whom he quotes as having once said (in The Middle Passage in 1962): ‘History’s built around achievement, and nothing was ever achieved in the Caribbean’ (291). Sy’s maritime empire is the very opposite of Gonzalo’s (and, by the same token, Montaigne’s) ‘Commonwealth’ which would do away with ‘Contract, succession,/ Bourn, bound of land, tilth... ’ (II.1.156-157). Xanthe will drown before her liberal knight maps the waters and through death, she becomes ‘vulnerable to love’ (353).

Xanthe’s ‘voyage out’ and death by drowning connect her not only to Ant’s first, Creole wife Estelle but also to Rachel Vinrace’s ‘difficult expedition’ and to countless other women like Edna Pontellier who, at the end of Kate Chopin’s The Awakening (1899), leaves ‘the shore ... far behind her’. Deep down at the sea-bottom, Xanthe’s body is enshrined in the ‘walled chamber’ of an oyster-like molusc and is ‘mantled in pearl, layer upon layer spun about her foreign body until, mummified at the mineral heart of a pale rainbow, she became forever smooth and sheeny and hard’ (355). Xanthe’s pearly sea-change (an ocean-deep version of her earthly Midas-like golden touch) echoes that in Ariel’s song in The Tempest:

Full fathom five thy father lies,  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes;  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange. (I.2.397-402)
Kit, Miranda’s father, subtly paraphrases Ariel when he pictures his mother, Estelle, ‘under the sea ... (with) a comb of polished oystershell and a mirror of mother-of-pearl mounted on a coral branch’ (67). Miranda also smells ‘of the sea, like oyster, fresh and salty’ (249). The oyster is symbolic of androgynous and hybrid wholeness; it is therefore no wonder that the post-independent female Prime Minister, Atala Seacole, endeavours to revive Liamuiga’s economy and restore the island’s psychic wholeness through the oyster-trade.

Some twenty years later in the 1980s, Miranda stumbles into George Felix again when he is playing Caliban on stage, just when she was just congratulating herself for being ‘not merely chaste or non-sexual – but post-sexual’ (369) in keeping with the ‘post-modern condition’ (371). In his search for the ‘lost Fatherland’, George has discarded his ‘whitey’s name’ and is called Shaka, after the great Zulu leader; yet he will end up ‘with no name ... the Unnameable’ (373). Both partaking of the ‘maroon’ condition, Miranda and Shaka run away together and have a child called Serafine, after the nanny who came with the Everards from the Caribbean. The English isle is thus likely to be peopled by little Feenys rather than little ‘Calibans’ (I.2.351).

Miranda and Caliban have been, since The Tempest, connected through the threat of rape, a theme which postcolonial and postmodern texts savagely built on. For instance, in one scene from Lamming’s Water with Berries, Miranda (Myra) is the victim of a collective rape by inebriated Calibans; in John Fowles’s The Collector (1963), Miranda is incarcerated by a Ferdinand/Caliban character and, although she is only symbolically ‘raped’ by the ‘deadweight Calibanity of England’, he takes pornographic shots of her after chloroforming her as he does with the butterflies he entraps for his collection.

By bringing Miranda and Caliban together, Warner substitutes a healthy union based on the recognition of mutual enslavement. Although Césaire in Une tempête had addressed the absence of Caliban’s legitimate father, Sylvia Wynter has pointed to ‘the most significant absence of all, that of Caliban’s woman’ and its corollary, the absence of Caliban’s ‘endogenous desire for her’ or ‘for the procreation of his own kind’ (Wynter 361). Although Warner does not envisage a Black mate for Caliban, it remains that in Indigo, Miranda becomes Caliban’s woman. In other words, Cathy Earnshaw of Wuthering Heights marries Heathcliff; Bertha Mason a.k.a. Antoinette Cosway in Jean Rhys’s Wide Sargasso Sea (1966) ousts Jane Eyre and lives happily ever after with Rochester; Kurtz repudiates his Intended and marries the Bangala bride. Exogamy and miscegenation – repressed in the untold story of Roukoubé – are possible in late 20th-century England in a Europe which remembers its feminine origins from its rape by Zeus.

From her burial place in Liamuiga in the 1980s, Sycorax hears the cries of women who drowned in the amniotic waters and she takes into her
earthly womb all their sorrows past and present, locked up in the
corniced caskets of the deep. Like Prospero abjuring his rough magic,
Sycorax wished she had known that her power was ‘of little weight’; ‘she
would have abjured her art, left off cursing, left off binding fast and loose
with spells’ (208). By foregrounding Sycorax, the maternal Imago, Warner
weaves a tapestry that had been bleaching women of colour into asocial
invisibility. Like Gloria Naylor in Mama Day (1988) who weaves together
feminist and black concerns through the story of the Southern conjure
woman Miranda Day,22 Warner restores the ‘native’ female subject.
Through Serafine, Miranda’s nurse, Sycorax provides the Epilogue that
used to be Prospero’s.

Serafine’s daisy wreath (26) and her ‘tree of life’ link her to Sycorax
whereas her name ‘Killebree’, after ‘the tiniest bird in the Lord’s creation’
(25) endows her with the property of the bird-like singer, Ariel. Yet, she
is less a singer than a story-teller. Serafine, like the Queen of Sheba and
the Mother Goose figure, two of Warner’s favourite fairy-tale figures, is ‘a
wise queen, an anonymous outside figure’ who ‘holds the secret of the
story (and) knows the riddles’ (Interview). Serafine opens and closes the
book with her fairy tales, which function as Fowlesian ‘maggots’, i.e. sub­
texts in a larval stage, or Renaissance masques which conjure up to the
child Miranda the island of her ancestors.

One such tale involves the tusky sea-monster, Manjiku (presumably from
the French mange-cul). Indeed, in his deep desire to procreate, ‘to be a
woman’ (216), Manjiku swallows anything female that comes his way,
especially pregnant or menstruating women. Warner reminds us that the
sea-monster, along with the mermaid, the amazon and the cannibal, ap­
ppears on early Western maps, marking out the dangerous places of terra
incognita.23 If the Unknown, the unsaid is feminine, then perhaps this is
why Prospero in Shakespeare’s play speaks the lines of Medea, Ovid’s
witch. Warner has combined in Manjiku both the traits of the ‘salvage and
deformed slave’ and of the European invader, for he is also white and
devouring: his desire to be a woman ‘arises from the thirst for the Other
– to elide difference by becoming one, by incorporating’ (Letter). The
Manjiku story is also a variant on ‘The Beauty and the Beast’, for Manjiku
becomes Prince Charming (219) once he swallows Amadé, a young
woman who drowns out of true love for Amadou who, for his part, was
in love with a beautiful mermaid who ultimately dies. The death of the
‘tiny silver woman’ (217) foretells Xanthe’s death whereas Amadé’s rebirth
as the bride to a new Manjiku ‘gives the happy ending to Miranda’
(Letter).

Serafine’s true heiress is Miranda who, from an early age, learns to read
Serafine’s script, which is a modern version of ‘Sycorax’s script’ (129)
made of scrawled markers and signs the white ‘tallow men’ could not
decipher. Serafine’s palms read like maps; they are indeed ‘mapped with darker
lines as if she had steeped them in ink to bring out the pattern, the lines
crisscrossed and wandered, and Miranda would have liked to be able to puzzle out the script, for she was beginning to read. Feeny’s palms were dry and hard like the paper in a story book, and when they handled Miranda she felt safe’ (4). Serafine has thus written the granddaughter’s plot, as well.

Serafine unscrambles the ‘noises’ (89; 356) of the island and turns them into stories ‘that give delight and hurt not’ (III.2.136-137); she emerges as the prototypical female keeper and transmitter. She is like the sea, replete with ‘parodies of birth: birth from the mouth rather than from the uterus’ (Thompson 50) and she also ‘speaks in the noises that fall from the mouth of the wind’ (89). She is connected with fecundity, emollience and lubrication. Serafine thus fuses within her what Trinh Min-ha has termed ‘the interrelation of woman, water and word (which) pervades African (i.e. Dogon) cosmogonies’, themselves connected with spinning and weaving. But Serafine not only weaves stories and spins yarns; she dyes them, as Warner does, after dipping them in the waters of the womb or in the bowls of colours which give the book its colour-spectrum.

Yet, Serafine, as a colonized subject, will ‘tell the story of Ariel as she has been told it’ (Interview). She is the ironic transmitter of the official story of Ariel’s alleged betrayal rather than of the apocryphal rendering, in which Ariel only inadvertently ‘warns’ Kit of Dule’s attack. The true story is buried in Ariel’s silence, as she grows into an ancient Indian hag who Père Labat reports to be the last living person to remember Sycorax’s language. The treachery assigned to Ariel is germane with the myth of the treacherous native, which Peter Hulme has exposed as a projection of the colonizers: ‘the claims of the colonists about the natives were a systematic projection of European behaviour onto the Native Americans ... it was the Europeans whose duplicity and cunning kept their colonies alive by manipulating the trust of their hosts; and eventually by betraying it’ (Hulme 167). Sycorax’s brother, Tiguary (the fictionalized homonym to Hulme’s Tegreman) thus says of the ‘shellfish people’: ‘they have double faces and double tongues and never keep their promises’ (99-100). What is retained is an imperial history laundered of its embarrassing reminders, like Ariel’s true story. The laundering process continues up to the present day, for the bubbly buoyancy of Gillian, Ant’s second wife, ensures that the ‘secret’ of Ant’s first marriage to a Creole is safely kept in the wreckage down below. The Epilogue is an infant’s cry, that of Miranda and Shaka’s baby girl, whose story, it is to be hoped, will not be yet another purloined letter of History.

Marina Warner’s response to The Tempest is neither post-colonial nor completely post-modern; it is Indigo/Blue; lilac/pink; orange/red; gold/white; green/khaki; maroon/black. This neither/nor structure is paradigmatic of the Miranda condition, for Miranda early in the text is described as a ‘slash’ (36) rather than the ‘hyphen’ that should unite the parting halves of the Everard couple. The colours are like the limits of language, like thresholds; they dissolve the ‘black-and-white’ print-accounts of ‘male-
diction' into Feeny's oral tales scripted from orature. What prevails in this fin de siècle and at the end of the millenium is a scrambled chessboard where the pawns are no longer conveniently black or white; where Miranda is 'blurred' (43) because 'she was shifting when the photograph was taken'.

NOTES

1. This paper was given at the EACLALS Conference in Graz, Austria in March 1993. It is also part of a book in progress.
3. For a survey of such rewritings across a broad geographical spectrum, see my own recent article, 'Prospero's Progeny Curses Back: Postcolonial, Postmodern, and Postpatriarchal Rewritings of The Tempest', in Theo D'Haen & Hans Bertens, Liminal Postmodernisms: the Postmodern, the Post(--)Colonial and the Post(--)Feminist, in Postmodern Studies, 8 (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995), 115-138.

In The Voyage Out, Woolf also employs a lot of allusions to The Tempest. See, for instance, Ariel's song recited by Mr. Grice (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1948), p. 54.
9. The island, the only piece of land which is considered female, somewhat belies the feminist dictum that 'solid ground is masculine, the sea feminine', as Mary Ellman argues in Thinking about Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 74.
10. Marina Warner, Indigo or Mapping the Waters (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 111. All references are to this edition and are cited in the text.
11. This was suggested to me by the author in Antwerp on September 27, 1993.
12. References to (European) paintings run through e.g. *In a Dark Wood* (1977) and a recent collection of short stories, *Mermaids in the Basement* (1993).


17. See George Lang, ‘In Every Clime: Literary Notes Around the Discovery of Stana-Tongo Creole’, *Dutch Crossing*, 44 (Summer 1991), 60-76.


Who was John Richardson?

Canada’s first novelist is the usual reply.¹ He was born at Amherstberg in present day southern Ontario in 1796. When the War of 1812 broke out, he was sixteen, bored with school and fired up to join the Army in defence of Upper Canada against the Americans. He became a volunteer in the 41st Regiment, was involved in the surrender of Detroit to the British, took part in a number of skirmishes and battles in the years 1812 and 1813 in the Western District region of the front, until he was captured, together with most of his regiment, at the ignominious defeat at Moraviantown in October 1813. He spent a year as a prisoner of war in Frankfort, Kentucky under difficult circumstances before being paroled back to Canada, this time with a full commission in the British Army. On the way over to fight Napoleon’s second coming, the Battle of Waterloo was fought and for the first time in a generation Europe found itself with an uneasy peace. Richardson became part of a surplus war machine, scratched and scraped for the retention of his full commission by getting posted to the West Indies for a year, before lapsing back into the life of a half-pay British officer spent mainly in France in the mid-twenties. He got married in the British Embassy in Paris in the mid-twenties, probably more for his good looks than his income, probably waiting for another war to get him back on full pay, but in the meantime, we think, doing a bit of gambling, reading, attending theatres and being seen, as they then said, about the town, with an upwardly mobile, Beau Brummel set of aspirations and anxieties.

Around 1826, he put pen to paper, hoping to cash in on the new market for literature, especially novels, that suddenly opened up. The appetite for fiction was huge, stretching from the Silver Fork aristocratic fare to pulp, from satirical attacks on the establishment to romances. Fashion ruled the day, One season naval novels would be in, the next season military novels - all tapping into memories and constituencies from the late war, especially Wellington’s campaigns in the Peninsula.
Richardson had his own angle on this war, albeit a colonial side-show in the wilderness of Canada. He sent a prose piece to the New Monthly Magazine in London on his experiences, which got published alongside Stendhal's acid letters from Paris. He followed this up with a couple of verse pieces - one on Tecumseh - which were competent, very late-in-the-day imitations of imitations of Byron. They gave Richardson a kind of gentlemanly authority in the area of polite literature; at least, he legitimized himself in his own eyes. These performances were, quite literally, class acts, placing Richardson in a respectable niche, at the same time that he was carving out a distinctive territory for his writings. A novel, Ecarte, the name of a card game more difficult than snap and more socially acceptable than poker, was published with some success in 1829, before he really got down to his most successful novel, Wacousta, published in 1832. This is the novel that anchors the canon of English-Canadian literature, the genesis text of that early Family Compact generation looking back to that first great period of British arms in North America, after the French had gone down to defeat on the Plains of Abraham, when that thin red line had held out against the massed power of the Western tribes under the loose leadership of Pontiac. The siege of Detroit in 1763 was the Troy that never fell, in a land and empire that had not yet been fractured by the American Revolution. Detroit, Pontiac, and the disciplined professional soldier, Major Gladwyn, as the unflappable commandment of the fort, was a kind of Loyalist dream-beginning to an empire that never, from their point of view, made it in North America.

Undergraduates in Canada, if left to themselves, and deprived of Northrop Frye's notion of the Garrison Mentality or of Margaret Atwood's Survival equivalent, get lost in the gothic thickets, although when they realize that Mrs. Moodie is waiting for them in the genteel bush when they emerge, they can be reconciled to the thickets of Richardson.

I won't narrate the plot.

It made Richardson some money, but not enough. So, he joined a mercenary army called the British Legion, which was raised with the controversial connivance of Parliament to intervene in the Carlist War of Succession in Spain. It was a futile participation, very ill-equipped, extremely divisive between Whigs and Tories in England. Richardson got his title Major Richardson from this escapade and also got himself a reputation as a political writer of some ability and few scruples from the reports he sent back to London.

He obviously impressed enough people on the Tory side to get appointed as The Times correspondent to cover the aftermath of the Canadian rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada at 300 pounds per year. Unfortunately for him, he found himself persuaded, when he arrived back in the colony, after having spent more than half of his life abroad, by the arguments and influence of Charles Buller and Lord Durham, and sent
back Whig reports to a decidedly non-Whig paper. From that moment, he was stranded, with his Reformist principles intact, but without income or influence. He tried to shift himself into the politics and culture of Upper Canada, taking a loyalist, British line on Canada past, present and future, without having a political bone in his body and with, given the influx of immigration that had arrived in the Province since his departure for Waterloo, a quite weak sense of a new, volatile shifting of the cultural and social boundaries he remembered from his youth and that he had, quite naturally, carried with him in his travels.

He wrote Wacousta, Part 2 called The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled. A Tale of the Late American War (1840), which is just that: me, my brother, General Brock, Commodore Barclay and the Battle of Lake Erie. A historical novel, with reminiscence, some plot, but without the extravagance of emotion and conception that found its way into Wacousta. He followed this up with an official History of the War of 1812, commissioned with some reluctance by the Legislature, and that turned heavily into an account of the activities of the 41st Regiment in the Western District.

By 1842, Richardson was scrambling, screaming, fidgeting his increasingly destitute way through the labyrinthine contortions of power, politics, governors and parties in the two Canadas, now formally yoked into a United Province, during the forties. History was leaving a lot of people, institutions and attitudes behind in this decade and Richardson had put so much of his metaphoric money and ambitions into the Compact camp, that when it lost out utterly in the new political arrangements, there was nothing for Richardson to do but to scratch for what he could get and that was so little that it drove him to distraction and his second wife to an early grave. In 1848, after one quick, final visit to Walpole Island, he abandoned Canada in the after-wake of the Annexationist Manifesto and went down to New York. He tried to make it as an historical writer in the Cooper, frontier tradition - Wacousta had done well in mutilated textual form in the United States - and when that didn’t bring him enough either to eat or to keep up his pretentions, he wrote pulp fiction.

He died of starvation in 1853.

This is simply a life, one ready-made for the National Script that, soon after Confederation, enlisted him as honorary literary anchor of the good ship, the Dominion of Canada. The English-Canadian narrative of nation (Bhabha) begins at this point. This is fine: up to this moment, most of what has been said about Richardson slots into this frame of nation. But this account is now in such trouble that it is as well not to push it too much. This is, on reflection, not such a loss. One doesn’t have to think much about Richardson to figure that he belongs more readily to an imperial script than to a purely national one. British North America is what he is about and that, for him, boils down to the area he mapped out for the British reader in the opening section of Wacousta: Michilimackinac,
the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, the region that would include the present states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, northern New York. In short, what was known in the late eighteenth century as the Old Northwest. That means, then, the first British Empire, the mercantile one that went down one historical tube with the American defection, not the fully industrial-military complex of British Empire Two that the nineteenth century threw up and the one that everyone in the heart of postcolonial country today is attempting to throw off: Ashis Nandy, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha territory. There are ideological and historical discriminations to be made here. Imperialism is a word that totalizes, but that needs, rigorously and carefully, to be considered in defined historical contexts. It is one of those words, like capital, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty's subaltern studies perspective, that bullies the specific features of specific histories into its own order. Richardson's empire is the First One. This gets me, in a preliminary way, to the yoking of Richardson and empire. How about the Indians?

There were a lot of them in that Old Northwest: Ottawa, Potawatomi, Winnebago, Chippewa, Miami, Shawnee. In addition to these populations, John Askin, Richardson's merchant grandfather, is believed to have had three of his first children in a relationship with an Ottawa woman between 1772 and 1779, before he married his Canadien Detroit wife in 1773 by whom he had six further children. John Richardson's mother was, in one prevailing interpretation, the daughter of this Indian woman and the Askins and the Richardsons - the whole extended family - lived and worked continuously in what continued well into 1812 to be Indian country.

So, at last, we have it: Richardson, Indians, Empire. But now we have got this far, what have we got?

For a start, we can notice that Richardson is the child/grandchild of Indians and Empire, with kinship affiliations connecting him to all parties in the Northwest:

1. French through his grandmother Barthes;
2. Ottawa through that putative, absent grandmother;
3. British through his (Scottish) military surgeon father and (Northern Ireland Scots/Irish) grandfather. The whole Askin family spoke French and English interchangeably and John Askin Junior and his son John Baptiste Askin had close trading and military connections with the Ottawa and the Potawatomie. If John Richardson had stayed on in Canada after the War of 1812 he would have become a splinter of the Family Compact which took over the running of the Province in the post-war years. Wherever he eventually moved, it was always within the frame of empire, quite often in the most literal, patronage sense of the word. He was the child, product and milker of an imperial network. We could say that these two discrete items - Indians and Empire - found a lodgement inside the frame of Richardson himself. Not equally, not totally, not easily, but there. But having suggested the
The co-implication of these terms in the same man, it becomes important to sort out the gravitational weighting of this implication, the way in which these are, by no means, reconciliations of identity, and are, most decidedly, refusals, denials, camouflaged and brittle distancings of sensed association.

In doing this, we would not be working simply with the facts of Richardson's Indian birth relationship, but with the way in which he, subsequently, formally in his novels, informally outside of them, acknowledged, occluded, eluded this connection. We are dealing with emotional currents inside an order of symbolic arrangement, and often in a later social, professional circumstance which imposed its own tacit as well as explicit codes of expectation on what, apart from what he could personally say about these matters, and what audience/convention-wise he was constrained, positively and negatively, to say. His cradle in Amherstberg in 1796 had shadows and contexts to it that had to wait over thirty-five years for his own glance to look back on it. Of course, he didn't ever do that Amherstberg moment. He did the Pontiac uprising before it, and the War of 1812 after it, giving to this pivotal, in his work, unspoken moment, a brackets of Pontiac and Tecumseh. In this brackets of actual as well as imperially constructed Indians, neither his mother who died in 1810, nor his father who married again within six months and who lived on in Amherstberg until 1832, directly featured. Even to hint at formations of fictional Indian presences standing in such displaced, positive contrast to the negation and psychological absence of his parents opens up areas of Richardson's texts to interesting interpretative possibilities. We meet seams of emotional engagement and ideological representations and misrepresentations everywhere in his work that remind one of Homi Bhabha's comment on stereotypical constructions of the other: 'The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations'.

There is no doubt that the Richardson-Indian-Empire intersections have explicit and complicit simplifications, fixed as well as fixated forms of representation, a quite often moving attempt to control and deny the play of difference which, when buckling under the pressure of this control, yielded differences of such brutal and grotesque a kind that they exceeded - in the figures of Wacousta and Westbrook - the territorial limits of the social, the human and the natural that his time, period and class regarded as normative.

But I am uneasy with this introduction of Homi Bhabha, whose language and diagnosis are rooted in postmodern, neo-colonial space, in experiences and reflections that are a very long way from Richardson, interfering radically, root and branch, with the cultural meeting-ground, battleground
of that first Empire in the Northwest. And it is here that my grudge against some of the totalizing aspects of postcolonial theory in the Columbus 500 moment begins to show and my sympathy with E.P. Thompson's poverty of theory stance comes out. It is no secret that there are longue durée intellectual and ideological features to the way literature represents contact situations: colonial discourse features, tropes, themes, motifs that pass through Hispanic, French, English texts as European scripts. Many of these accounts are analytic, retrospective autopsy overviews from the centres of empire. The temptation to script Richardson, Indians, Empire in this way is not particularly effective for grasping the stranded, islanded, specific case of time, place and belief between different cultures in differential modes of formation, reformation, deformation that characterized their interaction.

What I am saying here is that the Old Northwest in the period between 1760 and 1812, although the site of confrontations between French, British, American and Indian forces, remained isolated into the forms of life that marked the fur-trading regime, remaining for a time immune to the trans-Appalachian flood of settlers that poured into Kentucky and Pennsylvania after the Revolution, and that was arrested in northern New York by the strength and diplomatic successes of the Six Nations. Fort Pitt and Fort Detroit were small outposts with a sense of being at the most distant communicative edge of a commercial empire. John Askin, Richardson's Scots-Irish grandfather, after arriving at Albany at the age of nineteen in 1757, spent all of his trading life in Michilimackinac and Detroit. Although his connections with fur traders like Alexander Henry and McGill were close and life-long and he played an impeccably sober role in his slot of empire, his connections, knowledge and family became quite local to the mix of cultures - Canadien, Indian, British - that he lived next to and inside of. I am very keen to emphasize the embedded situation of the Askin-Barth families in that territory of lineages and genealogies going deep into time and equally deeply, for many of them, into the lives, families and structures of the surrounding Indian peoples. The New People, the Metis whose consolidation into a political entity at Red River has been traced by Jacqueline Peterson, were already a social, fully-fledged community in existence in Askin's time. Askin, his eldest daughter Madelaine by (let us assume) his Ottawa consort, and by extension, John Richardson himself, her son, all came from this very interesting space. He was, however ambiguously he would carry this inheritance into a very different, ideologically-charged, racist world, a Native Son, in Richard Wright's sense.

As a final way of hammering the isolated fullness of this microworld home, we have to remind ourselves that it was only with the arrival of a settled and civil social and domestic order that a regime of discrimination that patrolled the borders of kinship and culture enforced itself in
these places. Sylvia Van Kirk (1980) has described this process with some accuracy.  

It is not difficult to sense the impact of these events on John Richardson’s self-reflections. And if we see him as the crucified remembrancer on the cross of the spinningly-different eras that he had to handle in his fifty-odd years of life, it is not hard to see what a terrible and multiple burden of mediations, shames and uncertainties he had to negotiate to both remember and remain whole, or at least coherent to himself.

But even Richardson’s difficulties could be said to pale next to the difficulty of a modern interpreter getting back to him, getting back to what George Grant, incorrectly of course in his essentialist way, might have called Richardson’s primal space.  

The battle that sent Richardson to Kentucky as a prisoner of war, killed Tecumseh and broke that line of Indian resistance that had spent two generations since the French and Indian War trying to stave off annihilation and removal.  

The Northwest became American and as landscape, detail, history it got overlaid with an apparatus of mythological narrative. Cass and Schoolcraft turned the defeated Indians into, at once, anachronism and antiquities, and the loser empires of France and Britain into a family quarrel that went divinely wrong.

Then came Parkman and Bancroft. After them, in a more satisfying and totalist metaphor, Turner’s frontier thesis; and finally, in the first global, national flush of the Cold War, the academic benedictions of self-congratulation: Henry Nash Smith’s Virgin Land (1950) and a flush hand of American Adams (Lewis) and, in a retrospect of schematic finalization of the Indians of the Northwest seen through the eyes of the eighteenth century Scotch Common Sense philosophers, Roy Harvey Pearce (1957) moving the real pieces aside, leaving us with - who could ask for anything more? - the Idea of the Savage, of Savagery sans even Savage. Consummatum est.

The frontier as a historical thesis was a clearance, removal device enabling the winners to thematize their new world in their own image, an image locked into the utopian shape of their own desires. Here, with Adam and Walt, the air is bracing, fresh, free, moral, transcendental. But, in its heyday, 1890 - 1970, Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier was the enabling theory of American Studies in its literary and historical forms.

Typology as forgetting.
Typology as removal.

What guarantee do we have that the tangle of theory that now interpellates us into its domain of postmodern, postcolonial discursive delights, is any different?

Listen to this delphic utterance from Frank Davey: ‘The dead are dead because they have, at best, problematical access to discourse’.  

Columbus, we know, is dead, but certainly in the lead-up to 1992 he didn’t want for access to discourse. ’Columbus’ in this reincarnation,
however, was simply Turner's 'frontier' in contemporary, dare I say it, postcolonial drag.

The last section of this paper is going to be a Columbus, postcolonial, E.P.Thompson excursion which, in its conclusion, may indicate one way of regaining access to that primal Askin space of Richardson, Indians, Empire that gives undertow and integrity to Richardson's fictions.

Columbus did do something with himself. He was not without talent. He brought the kiss of death to the aboriginal populations of the Americas; the kiss of a kind of economic, political and cultural life to the expansion of Europe into this hemisphere. Like those Russian dolls fitting into each other, he contains symbolic multitudes. All the villainy of exploration and empire grow from the shadow of Columbus, but also in European eyes, the heroism. The fascinating thing, then, about the massive Columbus myth is its pan-European frame: it stands at the beginning of European expansion to other parts of the globe; his first contact with the natives of Hispaniola has been scrutinized again and again, as the archetypal first contact of all first contacts. Perhaps justifiably so, since, as Stephen Hugh Jones has pointed out, 1492 was the first and last time that two whole populations, living in separate physical and mental worlds, previously unaware of each others' existence, met face to face.17

Even when the scramble for empire grew nasty between the British and the Spanish before and after the defeat of the Armada, Columbus was never swallowed into the defamatory Black Legend that Protestant imperial propaganda visited on the brutalities of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. Columbus, almost by tacit agreement among the imperial power-squabbles, enjoyed an Ishmael-like immunity. As if his discovery of the New World were a gift, divinely ordained, to a Christian world as its reward, in Spain certainly, for having defeated Islam and expelled the Jews. It was, indeed, a New World Order, especially if we throw in Gutenberg. The Italian Lazzaro Buonamico caught the prevailing euphoria in the following words: 'Do not believe that there exists anything more honorable to our and the preceding age than the invention of the printing press and the discovery of the new world; two things which I always thought could be compared, not only to Antiquity, but to immortality'.18 Columbus, then, even before the United States would retroactively embrace him for his status as the genesis of its Americas, got here in the dawn's early light and got his transcendental signifier status before the full nastiness got under way. Like Kurtz, all Europe has gone into the making of Columbus.

Now, it seemed by 1992, the unmasking of Columbus, in a deconstructive frenzy, came upon us, an endeavour again self-contracted to the discursive theory mills of Anglo-American thought. The site of the demythologizing and mea culpas was still heavy with the imperial project. One had an uneasy - although ultimately unfair - feeling in reading Todorov's Conquest of America from this side of the Atlantic, of a
re-accommodation, re-tooling job underway from Versailles, as indeed, with Peter Hulme’s more distinguished Colonial Encounters, one detected the revisionist atmospherics of a post-imperial Britain revisiting past sites. Both Todorov and Hulme bring an informed radical scepticism to bear on their colonial texts, which were, in truth, imperial texts wading through colonized space with their own Blucher boots. These reflection-texts of empire have an important value for certain target audiences and target cultures attempting to extricate themselves from their histories: catch-up time of conscience and method in the old imperial corrals and their outlying pastures. The target audience is, by no means, the Maya of Guatemala or Yucatan, the Mohawks of Oka. These peoples are still the exemplary fish caught in the think-net harness of empire, a harness strapped comfortably in this, hopefully, late dusk to a flock of well-trained, hermeneutic Minervan owls. The New Net, as Witi Ihimaera might put it, Goes Fishing.

The descent into discourse, the transformation of the world, history, economics, power itself, into the textual site of language, has been one of the most persistent forces in European thought since the Second World War, from structuralism and post-structuralism to deconstruction. Revolution, revelation, revaluation, devaluation have all fallen into an aftermath of Saussure. Bryan Palmer, speaking about Levi-Strauss and the beginnings of structuralism, makes this point about the take-over, take-off point of language as the key dominant formation of modern and postmodern scholarly discourse: ‘In universalizing Saussurian premises about langue, imposing them on economies, kinship systems, and exchange relations within ‘primitive’ societies, Levi-Strauss forced language out of the confines within which Saussure himself willingly placed it, literally initiating an interpretative moment in which any and all signifiers floated free of the referential constraints of material moorings’.

What makes me uneasy about these developments is the way postcolonial discourse itself has emerged as a penthouse/cellar within this panoptician prison house of free-floating linguistic signifiers. This is why I introduced into my title a whiff of E.P.Thompson’s anti-Althusser polemic, The Poverty of Theory. I asked myself what that part of contemporary postcolonial which tended to collapse different imperialisms, frontiers and societies into one Manichean morality play could do for what, in my research on Richardson, was turning out to be a quite complex and recalcitrant subject, one hard to locate with any of the current touchstone theories of nation, state or empire. The deconstructive peeling back of successive layers of interpretative frames as a way of re-accessing territory had its theoretical indebtedness. The post-structuralist basis of the postcolonial was also good for cleaning up the rigid determinism of structuralism and opening up notions of power, domination, agency, subject positions. But in downgrading history and off-loading, as a phenomenological archaism, the notion of experience as
a concrete lived activity in actual and active communities, the various posts often inflicted a stasis of theory on the events, objects and people they set out to address.

Thompson, in his assault on what he called Althusser's self-regulating orrery of thought, moved into his not unusual gear of metaphoric overkill, one which expressed his own investment in the socialist politics of the Cold War period, the imaginative vigour of which found its way into The Making of the English Working Class. Take this wonderful passage from The Poverty of Theory:

A cloud no bigger than a man’s hand crosses the English Channel from Paris, and then, in an instant, the trees, the orchard, the hedgerows, the field of wheat, are black with locusts. When at length they rise to fly on to the next parish, the boughs are bared of all culture, the fields have been stripped of every green blade of human aspiration; and in these skeletal forms and that blackened landscape, theoretical practice announces its discovery: 'the mode of production'.

Not only substantive knowledge, but also the very vocabularies of the human project - compassion, greed, love, pride, self-sacrifice, loyalty, treason, calumny - have been eaten down to the circuits of capital. These locusts are very learned platonists: if they settled on The Republic, they would leave it picked clean of all but the idea of a contradiction between a philosopher and a slave.20

Shades, for Australian readers, of Manning Clark. E.P. Thompson is being very English here, with his weakness for Blake, English country landscape and William Morris showing through.

I am not suggesting that theory of any kind has wrought this havoc with the Old Northwest and very early Upper Canada in the years before and after Richardson’s birth at Amherstberg in 1796. Relative to the focussed, cultivated shape of Thompson’s pastoral of England, the Old Northwest of John Askin, Richardson’s grandfather, was unfocussed, uncultivated, a terra nullius then and subsequently to European perceptions. The challenge of locating the gravitational specificities of that early nowhere of shifting imperial frictions, is very considerable. Many writers are uneasy with the way Thompson refuses to problematize this notion of experience,21 but he has refused steadfastly to abandon it. Rightly, in my opinion.

Without the elements of history, experience and social memory, the treason, loyalty, compassion and ego of Canadiens, Englishmen, Scots, Anglo-Irish, French, Shawnee, Potawatomee, Ottawa, Six Nations Indians in the period between the end of the French and Indian Wars and the War of 1812 would simply disappear.
Thompson, in his own work, drew on working class memories of its own traditions stretching in his part of England back to the Chartists and the Tolpuddle Martyrs of the 1830’s; Richardson too, I believe, drew extensively, in a coy, intensive way on the histories and social memories of his Upper Canada, of his grandparents and their associations, Native, Canadien and English. He drew on family myths; he used and was used by collective myths, compacts both national and imperial.

Richardson, Indians, Empire: we cannot unpack the dynamic and shifting features of these connections from the static, synchronic optics of a discursive-rich, neo-imperial present, in which no colonies, internal and external, people or places, are post-anything. We are not dealing with our tropes of invention, representation, fiction. As Raymond Firth put it to Edmund Leach’s proposition that all ethnography was, in the final resort, fiction: ‘The Trobriands are not Laputa, Tikopeia is not Lilliput’.  

The world, as they say, was there; it is, in spite of rumours to the contrary, here now. We need, I think, to keep in touch with the referential constraints of Bryan Palmer’s material moorings.

There was a place called L’Arbre de Croche, there was an Ottawa village there, we think Pontiac’s, in which an Indian woman, we believe, gave birth to John Askin’s first son, a year before the actual siege of Detroit in 1763, when an actual combination of Ottawa, Potawatomie and Chippewa - under the loose, general direction of Pontiac - began an all-out war against the British, garrisons as well as settlers, who had moved into the possession of Indian land after the defeat of French power in North America. Real blood, real deaths, immense suffering went on in these territories. Destruction, genocide, greed, hatred of a most fierce and obsessional kind issuing, among whites, into that frontier type that Melville caught in his metaphysics of Indian-hating; landgrabbing of an unprecedented, cynical, pre-emptive and corrupt magnitude, together with a heroism expended in good and bad causes, went on in this Northwest in these generations in a misery of literal, unsymbolized loss. Much of this texture of terrible event was bulldozed over by the amnesiac conceits of national and imperial myth, but much of it too remained tangled as retained oral memory in the underground margins of popular and tribal, pioneer as well as native remembrance.

This was the membrane space of John Richardson’s fiction, his theatre of Northwest memory, the classical meeting ground in North America of Indians and empire.

All empires are not, to paraphrase Judith Wright, one empire at last; all Indians are not one Indian at last; all deaths are not, in an important way, one Death at last. Actually, that is what both Todorov and Hulme - in spite of my swipe at them - would, in the end, uphold. The poverty of poor theory locked too rigidly into the blindness of one epistemological and heavily institutionalized moment may be the real postcolonial culprit.
NOTES


8. One of Richardson's last productions (1851) for the New York press was a gothic-horror piece called *Westbrook, the Outlaw; or the Avenging Wolf. An American Border Tale*, which rehearsed, graphically and with prurient ambiguity, the bestialities and taboos that Richardson felt moved in on civil society in 'wilderness' times and 'wilderness' places, like the Western front during the War of 1812.


16. This quote came to me in this form, with this intonation of humour, from an ACSANZ (Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand) Newsletter, March 1992. The source was Frank Davey's *Beyond Tish*. 
22. Raymond Firth, 'Fiction and Fact in Ethnography', responding to Edmund Leach, 'Tribal Ethnography: Past, Present and Future', both pieces from the Tonkin, McDonald and Chapman volume, History and Ethnicity cited in Note 17.
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