

RESIDUAL NATIONALISM AND
POSTCOLONIAL ANGLOPHONE LITERATURES

BY

WEIHSIN GUI

B.A. WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, 2003

A.M. BROWN UNIVERSITY, 2005

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 2008

© Copyright 2008 by Weihsin Gui

This dissertation by Weihsin Gui is accepted in its present form
by the Department of English as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date_____

Olakunle George, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

Date_____

Timothy Bewes, Reader

Date_____

Rey Chow, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date_____

Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School

CURRICULUM VITAE

Weihsin Gui was born in Singapore in 1978. As a recipient of a Freeman Asian Scholarship, he received his B.A. in English and East Asian Studies with High Honors from Wesleyan University in 2003. He then received his A.M. in English from Brown University in 2005. His articles have been published or are forthcoming in journals such as *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to Olakunle George, Timothy Bewes, and Rey Chow. Without their mentorship, encouragement, and insightful criticism, neither this intellectual project nor this international scholar would have made it this far. I would also like to thank Nancy Armstrong, Leonard Tennenhouse, Khachig Tololyan, and John Marx for taking the time and effort to offer advice and support on both my research and the harrowing process of job searching, even though they were not members of my dissertation committee. I am also grateful to Lorraine Mazza, Manager of Graduate Studies at Brown's English Department, for helping me with the complex logistics of being a graduate student. My thanks also to my fellow graduate students — Jacqueline Wernimont, Wendy Lee, Emily Steinlight, Jeannette Lee, Raymond Sultan, and Daniel Block — without whom my time at Brown would have been much drearier and more solitary. Last but not least, my utmost gratitude to my family: my parents, Poh Hong Aik and How Meng Gui, and my sister, Crystal Gui, who have stood by me even though I have been living and toiling on the other side of the world for almost a decade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
The Critic, the Text, and the World:	
What Nationalism Means Now to the Globalizing of Literary Studies	
Chapter Two	46
“An Exaggerated Version of This Buttoned-Up Stuff”:	
Residual Nationalism and Late Style in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Novels	
Chapter Three	93
“The Toil that is Balance”:	
Derek Walcott’s Crystallization and Interweaving of Nationalism	
and Transnationalism	
Chapter Four	151
“Not Monological but Multilogical”:	
Women’s Bodies and Transnational Writing in Shirley Geok-lin Lim's	
Essays and Fiction	
Afterword	204
Works Cited	208

CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITIC, THE TEXT, AND THE WORLD: WHAT NATIONALISM MEANS NOW TO THE GLOBALIZING OF LITERARY STUDIES

Introduction

My dissertation argues for the persistent and residual presence of nationalism and national culture as both a salient social formation and a productive critical concept within the context of globalizing literary studies and re-emergence of the descriptive category of “world literature.” My project articulates and attempts to answer three questions regarding globalization, nationalism, and literature. First, why do recent theories of globalization privilege authors and literary characters who are diasporic, migrant, and cosmopolitan, often at the expense of nationalism and national communities? Second, what happens to national culture in literature when the very idea of “culture” itself — as both everyday practice and expert knowledge — is defined, by theories of globalization, as inherently transnational and in opposition to the nation? Third, given that discourses of cultural globalization and global culture are often drawn from postcolonial studies, how does the postcolonial critique of culture and nationalism, staged through literary texts, help us rethink this binary opposition set up by globalization?

In this opening chapter, I discuss how such scholars of globalization and cosmopolitan as Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha, and Stuart Hall assume an essentialized opposition between nationalism and culture. Nationalism, on one hand, is defined as a homogeneous product of the state’s centralizing authority; culture, on the other hand, seems to be inherently heterogeneous, a product of the mixing of people,

ideas, and social practices across borders. These cultural theories of globalization, or what I call “globalism,” have created a corresponding move among literary scholars towards globalizing literary studies¹. However, these assumptions about homogeneous nationalism and hybrid culture arise from an interpretation of postcolonial theory that focuses on how cultural narratives of diasporic and migrant individuals and groups disrupt the centripetal power of the nation-state.

I rethink these assumptions on two levels. First, I examine theories of nationalism and nation-formation in political science and anthropology by scholars such as Ernst Gellner, Etienne Balibar, and Benedict Anderson. While these scholars approach nationalism from different disciplinary perspectives, they share the view that nationalism and national culture are constructed rather than natural entities, and that despite the dominance of one particular culture in the nation-state, this national culture is far from monolithic and absolute precisely because of its status as a created artifact rather than a given essence. National culture, therefore, appears to be a collective and immutable identity born out of race, language, and religion, but it is in fact an imagined narrative, a story that can be changed through its own logic with each retelling of the tale.

But the fact that national culture is constructed, narrated, or otherwise imagined should not detract from the political import of nationalism and its significance as a defence or a bulwark for people and their cultures against the exploitative forces of

¹ Bruce Robbins (2001) and Kwame Anthony Appiah (2001), for example, find cosmopolitan subjects in contemporary British novels and postcolonial literary narratives. Amitava Kumar (2003) focuses on how global capital affects the literary imagination to produce what he calls “World Bank Literature.” Finally, in his introduction to a recent issue of the *PMLA* devoted to the topic of “Globalizing Literary Studies,” Giles Gunn proposes that globalization should not be limited to contemporary economic and demographic movements, but rather traced back “two millenia” in history to “the emergence of an Afro-Eurasian zone of civilization stretching from the shores of the Atlantic to the waters of the Pacific” (20).

global capital. Thus, on another level, I argue that postcolonial theory and literature reconceptualize culture and nationalism as closely interrelated social formations. Using Raymond Williams's ideas of dominant, residual, and emergent social forms and the cultural criticism of the Frankfurt School, I reconceptualize nationalism as a residual formation that both informs and questions the dominance of culture. Or, from Theodor Adorno's perspective, the intertwining of nationalism with culture challenges the latter's objectification as a concept and a commodity within the global culture industry by placing it within a grid of social, political, and historical connections both within and outside of the nation. In this vein, I read Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, and Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* as reshaping nationalism from an anti-colonial identity into a relational field of politics and culture between nations, between individuals and communities grappling with postcolonial modernity and the vicissitudes of globalization. My discussion of Said also stages a conversation between his *Culture and Imperialism* and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* that shows how Gilroy's emphasis on transnational cultural flows assumes a monolithic and homogeneous form of nationalism as a cultural identity, something that Said challenges in his work. Although many postcolonial scholars have found Gilroy's work amenable, *The Black Atlantic* does not explicitly engage postcolonial studies or any strand of postcolonial criticism. While Gilroy's book has become a paradigm of transnational and globalizing scholarship, I suggest that bringing Said's understanding of nationalism as a political consciousness and cultural critique to bear on Gilroy's conceptualization of transnationalism gives us a fuller understanding of the relationship between nationalism and transnationalism — in other words, it shows us that the national and the transnational are (to use Said's

phrase) contrapuntal rather than contradictory. They are two distinct but related forms of politics and culture, and out of their intertwining the defined yet mutable community of the nation is formed and constantly reformed. I offer the term “residual nationalism” as a way of changing the binary opposition of insular nation and ex-centric culture by reconfiguring national culture as a dynamic social space formed contrapuntally through cultural connections between other nations, peoples, and places.

This residual nationalism is, I argue, a significant presence in the works of the writers I discuss in the other chapters of my dissertation. Kazuo Ishiguro, Derek Walcott, Fiona Cheong, and Shirley Geok-lin Lim have all been acclaimed as diasporic, migrant, and cosmopolitan writers. Similarly, their countries and regions of origin (Britain, the Caribbean, Malaysia and Singapore) are also implicated in discourses of globalization — as former imperial metropole or colonies, hybrid societies of ethnic and cultural mixtures, and newly industrialized economies at the forefront of global finance capital. But I suggest that these writers and their work reconceptualize the opposition between national and global or world literatures; they rethink literary characters who would normally represent transnational mobility into figures of international connections, and, in doing so, emphasize the relations between national cultures rather than the decentered cultural flows of globalization.

“Globalism”: Theories of Globalization and Global Culture

First, let me examine the writings of several scholars whose work exemplifies the postnational turn in globalism, by which I mean theories of global culture emerging from socio-economic globalization. Along with the idea of traveling cultures and routes of exchange developed in anthropology by James Clifford (1988), scholars of

postcolonialism, ethnic and cultural studies have in the recent past challenged the authority of the nation-state and nationalism by emphasizing culture's decentralizing force through concepts such as diaspora, transnationalism, and postnationalism. My use of the term "culture" draws on both Raymond Williams's and Edward Said's explication of the term. Williams traces the genealogy of the term and its associations with both the organic, personal sense of "cultivation" and the grand, edifying sense of "civilization," and concludes that culture "became a noun of 'inner' process, specialized to its presumed agencies in 'intellectual life' and 'the arts.' It became also a noun of general process, specialized to its presumed configurations in 'whole ways of life.' [...] Each tendency is ready to deny any proper use of the concept to the other, in spite of many attempts at reconciliation" (17). To use Williams's terminology, the recent globalizing of literary studies may be understood as an attempt at reconciling these two senses of culture. It articulates literature, as a form of "inner" and "intellectual life," with "whole ways of life" whose flows and networks are assumed to move outside and beyond the boundaries of tribe, race, or nation. Literature, for Edward Said, is part of an elite cultural domain that includes "those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure" (xii). Said focuses on elite culture and expert knowledge that appear to be "refining and elevating element[s]" or "each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought" (xii), and often serve as "a source of identity, and a combative one at that" (xiii). In order to demystify culture, to bring it down from its elevated perch and break it free of its conflation with ethnic or national identity, Said argues that we need to connect literature and other works of high culture "not only with that pleasure

and profit [that we derive from them] but also with the imperial process of which they were manifestly and unconcealedly a part" (xiv). By linking literary works to "the imperial process," Said connects what Williams would call the inner processes of intellectual life with the general process of social and political conditions. But Said goes one step farther than Williams by implying that culture should not be thought of as an identity position — instead, it is the task of the critic of culture to expose culture and the identities derived from it as "a sort of theater where various political and ideological causes engage one another," or, more radically, "a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another"(xiii).

In my following discussion of theories of global culture and transnational cultural identities proposed by Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, and Stuart Hall, I argue that in order to valorize culture as everyday practice in the anthropological or sociological sense, these theorists must ignore or suppress national culture and nationalism as (to use Said's terms) an engaged theater or a contested battleground. In other words, they refine and elevate culture — understood as a general process and whole ways of life instead of aesthetic forms and expert knowledge — to the status of the best that has been known and thought. Indeed, for scholars of global culture, the concepts of diaspora, migration, and transnationalism have come to denote not only population flows across inter- and intra-national borders, but also to connote social and symbolic exchanges and intermixings across such borders. From the perspective of colonial and postcolonial discourse, Homi Bhabha stresses the hybridity and ambivalence of subjects under colonialism to resist and subvert colonial authority. Bhabha sees similar disseminating encounters taking place in the late twentieth century as diasporic and migrant communities subvert the nation-state. In a key essay on

postnational thinking, Bhabha challenges “the historical certainty and settled nature of [nationalism]” by focusing on “the locality of culture” that, he argues, “is more *around* temporality than *about* [the] historicity” of the nation as a totalizing project (292, original emphasis). Using “the disjunctive temporality of the nation” resulting from the slippage between what he calls the pedagogical and performative aspects of nationalism, Bhabha re-reads the monolithic nation-state as “the liminal figure of the nation-space” where “no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves” (299) and where “the return of the diasporic; the postcolonial” are staged in “culture’s transnational dissemination” (319, 320). Bhabha’s thinking deconstructs nationalism as an anti-colonial project, whereby the *differánce* of culture introduces a temporal slippage into and thus a deferral of nationalism’s “transcendent or metaphysical authority” as a political ideology. What is important here is that Bhabha’s case against nationalism as a political ideology is predicated on an opposition of the nation’s “historical certainty and settled nature” against “culture’s transnational dissemination.” But, *contra* Bhabha, I suggest that culture’s locality may also be found within the nation, as national culture, rather than outside or beyond it. Bhabha’s redefinition of the homogenizing, totalizing project of the nation-state into a nation-space of contesting narratives may destabilize the hyphen between nation and state, but his argument misses the persistent and residual national connections that diasporic and postcolonial individuals or communities maintain, because it equates such figures with transnational culture or cultural practices that must always transcend or cross over the nation.

Along with Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai’s work on worldwide cultural flows attempts to “think ourselves beyond the nation” (158). Arjun Appadurai coins the term

“postnational” to describe the various overlapping “scapes” of economic, political, cultural, and demographic flows that make up a decentralized global system; he proposes that “we are in the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete,” and that “while nations might continue to exist, the steady erosion of the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolize loyalty will encourage the spread of national forms that are largely divorced from territorial states” (169). But Appadurai’s critique of nationalism in the form of the territorial state requires an emphasis on a deterritorialized national consciousness, a move similar to the one that Bhabha makes at the end of his essay on dissemination. Appadurai, like Bhabha, challenges nationalism in the form of the nation-state but wants to retain the idea of nationalism as a *nation-space*, because he ultimately favors the “extraterritorial nationalism of populations who love America but are not necessarily attached to the United States” (171). While Appadurai opposes the dominant narrative of “monopatriotism,” he reinstates the U.S.A. as the privileged site of postnationalism because “America may yet construct another narrative of enduring significance,” and “in this narrative, bounded territories could give way to diasporic networks, nations to transnations, and patriotism itself could become plural, serial, contextual and mobile” (Appadurai 176). It is clear that Appadurai’s postnationalism is actually located in the one remaining nation that is also a superpower state. As Gautam Premnath observes, the work of Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai has generated “the claim that the nation-state and its citizen-subjects have been superseded as the paradigmatic units of modern sociality,” and this claim in turns creates “a tendency to move [...] past the nation-state in order to open up discourses of diaspora, migrancy, and trans- and postnationalism” (“Weak Sovereignty” 254). If, so the argument goes, we must transgress or bypass the

nation-state, then it stands to reason that our next horizon of reading must now be the changing space of diaspora, migration and trans- or postnationalism — in other words, the entire world or globe in its totality and fluidity.

The fluidity of transnational identities is emphasized by Stuart Hall, who uses the idea of diaspora to destabilize national and ethnic identities. Hall rethinks cultural identity in diasporic rather than nationalist terms and argues for a concept of culture that is “not an essence, but a *positioning*,” one that enables “a politics of identity, a politics of position” without “an unproblematic, transcendental ‘law of origin’” (226, original emphasis). Stuart Hall’s metaphorization of Caribbean hybridity into a cultural identity that exemplifies our globalized world both assumes that the diasporic condition is an already accomplished fact, and elides the nationalist sentiments of the diasporas he uses as his examples. For example, Hall argues that

diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of ‘ethnicity’. We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the hands of this backward-looking conception of diaspora — and the complicity of the West with it.” (“Cultural Identity” 235)

Hall’s anti-imperialist criticism is simultaneously anti-nationalist. With the locution, “the people of Palestine” Hall identifies a population defined by their flight from a geographical location that is rightly theirs. The competition for that territory, the Israeli population that currently governs it, offers a contrastingly “backward-looking conception of diaspora,” according to Hall. Their nationalism, and perhaps even the concept of nationalism itself, appears regressive, atavistic and uncomfortably complicit with “the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising” Western power. In place of the singular and static concepts of ethnicity and nationalism, Hall offers diaspora as an

“experience” of productive cultural identities” which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*” (“Cultural Identity” 235, original emphasis). But Hall sidesteps the national consciousness of the Afro-Caribbean and Palestinian diasporic peoples by reframing identity in exclusively cultural terms, such that “the issue of cultural identity now constitutes one of the most serious global problems at the start of the twenty-first century” (“Negotiating” 25). By using diaspora as a metaphor for cultural identity, and framing cultural identity within a global framework, Hall tries to portray nationalism as a limited version of identity. But Hall himself creates another limited identity position when he suggests that Caribbean people’s identities in the next century will be formed by “using the enormously rich and complex cultural heritages [...] as the different musics out of which a Caribbean sound might one day be produced” (“Negotiating” 38). While the concept of “a Caribbean sound” seems more attractive and liberating than national identity, this concept functions in Hall’s thinking as a surrogate for collective identity, nationalist or otherwise. Despite his contention that diaspora, as a metaphor, helps us to think of “identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (“Cultural Identity”, 222), Hall does not explain how the identity of his privileged subjects, “the Afro-Caribbean people [who are] already people of a diaspora,” (“Cultural Identity” 235) is formed — and whether it is formed within or in dialogue with nationalism.

Even with the increase in flows of people, capital, and culture around the globe, nations have not withered away in fiction or in fact. Revealing spaces of minority discourses and counter-narratives, and refiguring the national imaginary as a complex weave of negotiations and multiple identifications, do not lead to a definitive

repudiation of the nation as a unit of analysis. The persistence of tropes and figures of national consciousness in literary texts, and the loosening of the hyphen between nation and state suggest that nationalism is a salient category and the nation a contested space. A literary text that dismisses or chastises the nation-state has, by taking up the nation-state as its interlocutor, retains its salience as a concept even if the contextual framework is transnational, postnational, and diasporic. The transnational, postnational, and diasporic arguments put forward by Bhabha, Appadurai, and Hall all emphasize the potential of culture — both as everyday practice and cultivated learning — to subvert nationalistic discourse and transgress national boundaries. Furthermore, the figure who embodies and represents these transgressions is the diasporic or migrant subject, a subject whose mobility and deterritorialized condition foregrounds a radical culture or ethnicity that resists the leveling force of nationalism.

But this strategic move that sets culture (as figured in the ethnicized, diasporic subject) against the nation-state is itself inscribed within a larger, global discourse that may limit or undermine culture's radical heterogeneity. As Khachig Tölölyan observes, the increasing valorization of the term "diaspora" causes "a reduction of or an inattention to the complexity of the past and present of diasporic social formations. [...] which occurs when the ideas of identity and subjectivity produced by a theory-inflected investigation of texts is projected upon the *social* text of diaspora life" ("Rethinking Diaspora(s)" 28-29, original emphasis). Tölölyan's concern about the over-emphasis on identity and subjectivity is echoed by the Chicago Cultural Studies Group, for whom multiculturalism runs the danger of being stripped of its critical force by corporate capital to become "the Bennetton effect" (532); in the same vein, cultural studies' radicalism in higher education can become an excuse for a reactionary call for "the

politicization of academic knowledge by the right" (552). More recently, Slavoj Žižek and Rey Chow have trenchantly examined how cultural and ethnic identities that offer the possibility of agency and change may be complicit with the logic of global capital. Žižek draws disturbing parallels between nineteenth-century as well as present-day Western cultural imperialism and multiculturalism, emphasizing how multiculturalism can repeat a colonial form of "racism with a distance," "a privileged universal position" that "'respects the Other's identity [...] as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community'" (44). Chow considers how the dominant articulations of cultural, ethnic, and diasporic identities may be "already firmly inscribed with the economic and ideological workings of capitalism" such that the radical challenge put forward from these identity positions "constitutes the economically logical and socially viable vocation for them to assume" (48). In short, the valorization of diasporic and ethnic cultures against nation-states creates a dichotomy that aligns itself with the logic of global capital. This "diasporic exorbitation" occurs "when one of several critical vantage points [...] comes to be seen as a commanding height, a standpoint from which it is possible to comprehend the whole" (Premnath 6). It creates a culture-effect that stabilizes and objectifies the dynamic plurality of cultures: the identities and positions resulting from such objectification have predetermined ends mapped out for them, or become ends in themselves instead of allowing for an active politics. Culture's mobility, heterogeneity and radicalism are encompassed by globalization and become symptoms of its administration.

Nationalism as Congruency, Narration, and Imagination

Globalization, the discourse of global culture, and the globalizing of literary studies mark different critical movements away from postcolonial studies towards other

ways of reading literary texts on a worldwide scale, and this has caused nations and national literatures to be either declared obsolete and dead, or defended as salient and vital². In either case, recent criticism has focused on how capital, cultural and population flows transgress national boundaries, either in the present moment or throughout human history, and how literary texts either reflect these transgressions or belie their efficacy. Within the framework of globalization, culture, in both its “elite” sense of cultivated learning and “popular” sense of lived experience and practices, is often thought of as threatened by the homogenization of official nationalism. Culture is regarded as essentially transnational or postnational: its heterogeneity exceeds and transcends the boundaries of the nation-state, and, through its radicalism against the authoritarian nation-state and multinational capital, it ameliorates the excesses of economic globalization by providing a humane counterpoint to the ruthlessness of economic globalization through the figures of diasporic, migrant, or cosmopolitan subjects.

The antagonistic dichotomy between culture and nationalism should be rethought for two reasons. First, as the Chicago Cultural Studies Group and other critics have shown, the supposedly radical terms on which culture challenges nationalism are often set up by the rhetoric of globalization rather than intrinsic to culture itself. Culture is therefore in danger of becoming stabilized into identity categories that are seen as ends in themselves, administered by global capital rather than challenging it. Second, revisiting the idea of nationalism as national consciousness, which is simultaneously a resistance towards imperialism and global capital and a comparative awareness of and

² For a defence of the nation-state, national culture, and national literature, see Lazarus (1997), Jusdanis (2001), and Szeman (2003) respectively.

connection to other geopolitical collectives, makes visible the dynamic and mutually enabling connections between nationalism and culture. These connections have often been elided by the assumption that culture in our postmodern world must be global, local, or glocal³. Coming from the perspectives of political science and anthropology, Ernst Gellner, Etienne Balibar, and Benedict Anderson examine the relationships between nation formation, modernity and culture, and point out that nationalism does not necessarily homogenize culture into a monolithic collective identity, even though it certainly makes one particular culture dominant. In their analyses, nationalism is not the manifestation of an age-old ethnic or racial identity that binds a people together; instead, it is a thoroughly modern phenomenon created out of a negotiation between state agents, a diverse population, and the prevailing geopolitical and economic conditions in order to mobilize that population so that it may survive and flourish under such conditions. There is nothing natural or immutable about the nation, and, as Gellner, Balibar, and Anderson emphasize in their respective ways, the complexity and heterogeneity of cultures within the rubric of the nation means that the idea of the nation is contingent and can be radically altered rather than objectively subsumed by globalization.

Ernst Gellner, for example, defines nationalism as “the striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof, and not more than one roof at that” (296), but this striving for political and cultural congruency is relatively and surprisingly weak, because “the number of potential nationalisms which failed to

³ Arif Dirlik uses these terms as a way of “distinguishing a ‘critical localism’ from localism as an ideological articulation of capitalism in its current phase” (22). While Dirlik’s contestation of capitalism’s reification of culture at the local level is compatible with my own project, he finds no place for nationalism in his formulation. In contrast, I wish to stress the specific persistence of national consciousness in one particular aspect of “elite” culture: literary texts that are supposedly global in theme and scope.

bark is far, far larger than those which did, though *they* have captured all our attention” (296, original emphasis). What is important here is that Gellner’s idea of political and cultural congruency, of “a culture with its own political roof,” suggests the congruency between politics and culture can be distinguished from identity formation. Congruency suggests correspondence or agreement rather than homogenization for the sake of identification. That many cultural groups do not or cannot find political expression as nations suggests that nationalism is a contested and contingent discursive field rather than a natural or given identity. In Gellner’s words:

Nations are not inscribed into the nature of things, they do not constitute a political version of the doctrine of natural kinds. Nor were national states the manifest ultimate destiny of ethnic or cultural groups. What do exist are cultures, often subtly grouped, shading into each other, overlapping, intertwined; and there exist, usually but not always, political units of all shapes and sizes. (301)

The congruency of politics and culture means that the fit between one term and the other is neither perfect nor unbreakable — if cultures are “shading into each other, overlapping, intertwined,” it stands to reason that the political make-up of the nation will also be correspondingly overlapping and intertwined. Thus, we move away from the nation as an expression of racial or linguistic solidarity and towards a structural evaluation of nationalism emerging out of the transnational social, political, and economic relations in the era of imperialism and industrialization, because “there is also a link between nationalism and the processes of colonialism, imperialism and de-colonization. The emergence of industrial society in Western Europe had as its consequence the virtual conquest of the entire world by European powers, and sometimes by European settler populations” (Gellner 295). Nationalism is thus always formed beyond the scope of the local, since it is generated through the world-wide

processes of colonialism and decolonization that go hand-in-glove with industrial modernization. The refashioning of society to meet the needs of industrial production is key to Gellner's reappraisal of nationalism, for nationalism

is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population. It means that generalized diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves. (307)

To sum it up, "it is not the case that nationalism imposes homogeneity out of a wilful cultural *Machtbedürfnis* [need for power]; it is the objective need for a homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism" (Gellner 298), and "it is not that the age of nationalism is a mere summation of the awakening and political self-assertion of this, or the other nation" but rather, "it is nationalism which engenders nations, not the other way around" (Gellner 306). Following this argument, proponents of globalization and transnationalism who argue that nationalism homogenizes and reduces cultural plurality may have overlooked how the transnational conditions of capitalist production and cultural flows are the forces that create the need for homogeneity in a national population. Transnationalism may create a demand for homogeneity within nationalism, but, as I shall explain in my discussion of postcolonial nationalism, there is always critical resistance to this form of homogeneity from within the logic of nationalism, a resistance that arises when the imposition of one, high culture on society – the attempt to create an absolute national identity – clashes with the striving for

congruency between culture and politics, which we may also call the field of political consciousness and cultural criticism.

Like Gellner, Etienne Balibar focuses on the historical and material conditions of the capitalist world-system to trace and evaluate the emergence of nationalism, but Balibar's approach also draws on Althusser's structural model of subjectivity and interpellation to analyze the formation of national culture and identity. According to Balibar, the conventional reasoning that individuals have particular identities that are subsumed and homogenized into a larger collective identity is mistaken, because

it is not a question of setting a collective identity against individual identities. All identity is individual, but there is no individual identity that is not historical or, in other words, constructed within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols. [...] The real question is how the dominant reference points of individual identity change over time and with the changing of institutional environment. (138-139)

Following Balibar's reasoning, national identity is both a collective and an individual definition of the self, and the collective and individual dimensions are constantly negotiated and constructed within a larger semantic field. Moreover, these definitions are also open to re-definition, since the "dominant reference points" are transformed with "the changing of institutional environment." Balibar gives the name "fictive ethnicity" (140) to this constantly negotiated and constructed identity, and stresses that the adjective "fictive" does not mean "a pure and simple illusion without historical effects" (140) but must be understood

in the sense of an institutional effect, a 'fabrication.' No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized — that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions. (140)

This fictive ethnicity that appears to be natural as well as historically and socially transcendent not only defines the individual and the collective, it also provides the grounds for individuals and collectives to relate to others outside the constructed boundaries: it gives them “both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. Which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, *in the name of* the collectivity whose name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process” (Balibar 140-141, original emphasis). This process, which Ernst Gellner would call “the general imposition of a high culture on society” for “reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication” in an industrializing community (307), becomes more variable and manifold in Balibar’s analysis. The construction of a fictive ethnicity includes a form of both personal discovery (“I’m actually an X”) and collective participation (“I ought to join my fellow Xs”), the repeated negotiation of these forms as the material and social conditions change (“What does being an X mean?”), and the idealization of the nation as the logical and natural end or political and cultural manifestation of this fictive ethnicity (“All Xs ought to have a mother/father/homeland”).

But Balibar’s discussion of this interpellation of fictive ethnicity as a narrative suggests that various forms of narration such as historiographies, political biographies, and literary texts can intervene in this process whereby national culture becomes stabilized as national identity. Balibar frames this narrative process as one of repetition and reproduction that applies to countries which were former colonizers as well as formerly colonized:

in the history of every modern nation [...] there is never more than one single founding revolutionary event (which explains both the permanent temptation to repeat its forms, to imitate its episodes and characters, and the temptation found among the 'extreme' parties to suppress it, either by proving that national identity derives from before the revolution or by awaiting the realization of that identity from a *new* revolution which would complete the work of the first). The myth of origins and national continuity [...] is therefore an effective ideological form, in which the imagined singularity of national formation is constructed daily, by moving back from the present into the past. (132-133, original emphasis)

While Balibar points out that the narrative repetition and imitation of founding events often leads to the reproduction of "the myth of origins and national continuity" as "an effective ideological form," he also points out that this is a "permanent temptation" rather than an absolute consequence of the interpellation of fictive ethnicity. His use of this phrase suggests that these narratives of a founding national moment are not monolithic. They may be reimagined and used to interrogate and challenge the naturalization of ethnicity and idealization of national identity, as well as to reveal the socio-historical conditions and semantic elements that make up these processes. As Balibar himself elaborates,

the question of the nation form, if it is henceforth an open one, is, at bottom, the question of knowing under what historical conditions it is possible to institute such a thing [...] Asking this question is another way of asking oneself to what transition in civilization the nationalization of societies corresponds, and what are the figures of individuality between which nationality moves. (138)

The nation form is an open process involving negotiations between the political structure of the state, the lived or vernacular as well as learned or "high" culture of a population, and the socio-economic and political conditions of production that connect them to other nations. Furthermore, even if we assume that globalization marks a "transition in civilization" that moves from an industrial-Fordist to a postindustrial

world-system dominated by finance capital, it does not mean that the “nationalization of societies” has or will wither away. Instead,

Every ‘people,’ which is the product of a national process of ethnicization, is forced today to find its own means of going beyond exclusivism or identitarian ideology in the world of transnational communications and global relations or force. Or rather: every individual is compelled to find in the transformation of the imaginary of ‘his’ or ‘her’ people the means to leave it, in order to communicate with the individuals of other peoples with which he or she shares the same interests and, to some extent, the same future. (Balibar 148)

What is significant here is that the means to move out of the restrictive boundaries of national identity are to be found in the very processes that lead to “the transformation of the imaginary of ‘his’ or ‘her’ people” into a national identity in the first place. This method of critique from within is (to use Theodor Adorno’s phrase) an immanent as opposed to an external or transcendent move, in which the logic and terms of nationalism are used to project or conceptualize a way of moving beyond its own limitations. National form can be interrogated and reimagined at the level of narrative texts and cultural symbols to move past exclusionary ethnic or linguistic identities (while still retaining these identities as salient elements of a national culture) in order to establish transnational connections. The national and the transnational do not cancel each other out but serve as mutual counterpoints, since (as both Gellner and Balibar remind us) the very idea of the nation is formed out of transnational historical and semantic fields to begin with.

Nationalism as a narrative of imagined politico-cultural congruence produced out of transnational conditions is central to Benedict Anderson’s idea of nations as “cultural artefacts” formed through “the spontaneous distillation of a complex “crossing” of discrete historical forces” in the Western hemisphere during the eighteenth

century, “but that, once created, became “modular,” capable of being transplanted” over the course of the twentieth century and in other parts of the world (4). The historical forces that Anderson focuses on are the rise of print capitalism and print languages that accompany industrialization, the waning of religion as a sovereign force that holds a population under the sway of its leaders, and colonial administration as well as anti-colonial movements that combine the first two forces into exploitative and liberating regimes respectively. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson establishes two by now familiar dictums: first, the nation is “an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (6); second, the newspaper and the novel are exemplary forms of nationalizing narratives because they express “the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time [that] is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation [...] conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history” (26). This seems to correspond to Balibar’s emphasis on the repetition of the nation’s seminal events in order to reproduce its cohesive boundaries, but Walter Benjamin’s idea of “homogeneous, empty time” that Anderson employs here is linked (in the German critic’s thinking) with the larger, inexorable and teleological concept of “the historical progress of mankind” (“Theses” 261). Benjamin urges his readers to interrogate and critique this notion of human progress through a standardized temporality, and in the same vein, Anderson’s description of the calendrical march of the nation deserves qualification, which he does obliquely offer. Anderson himself implies that the newspaper and the novel are not the only forms analogous or amenable to nationalism, because “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6). While the notion of homogeneous empty time might describe one form of temporality, this

seems to apply only to the temporality that the nation as a whole, “as a solid community” moves through – within this apparently solid community, the experience and effect of temporality may have manifold variations that deviate from this dominant narrative. As we see in the way Anderson discusses the French Revolution, what occurs is something more akin to Balibar’s repetition of seminal, founding events rather than homogeneous, empty time:

But once it had occurred, it entered the accumulating memory of print. The overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of events experienced by its makers and its victims became a ‘thing’ – and with its own name: The French Revolution. Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a ‘concept’ on the printed page, and, in due course, into a model [...] but of its ‘it-ness’, as it were, no one ever after had much doubt. (80-81)

The ontology of the French Revolution – the thing in itself or the “it-ness” of the “overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of events” in lived experience – becomes inseparable from its existence as a discursive event “shaped by millions of printed words” that not only confirm its existence, but also allow it to become “a model” that can be taken up at other times in other places.

Anderson’s earlier comment about style also gains more significance if we understand it in this discursive and textual register. On one hand, it corresponds with Balibar’s notion that the nation’s form is an open-ended question rather than a closed system determined by language, race, or religion; it also accords with Gellner’s conceptualization of nationalism as a congruence rather than an identity between culture and politics. But on the other hand, we might also understand literary representations of nationalism as stylized figurations of this politico-cultural congruence. Because Anderson quotes two turn-of-the-century Filipino novels, both

written in a historical realist style, to explore the analogy between nationalism and the novel (Anderson 26-32), it might appear as if nationalism is analogous to realism (and specifically historical realism). But thinking of nationalism as a stylized representation of the correspondence — a correspondence which undergoes constant negotiation — between a community's culture and its political armature broadens the range of narratives that might productively construct, critique, or otherwise intersect with nationalism.

My point in emphasizing this stylistic turn in Anderson's thinking is to bring the discussion of nationalism and literature out of the tried-and-tested terrain of identity formation, political exhortation, and cultural homogenization, because there is a distinction to be made between nationalism and patriotism, between political consciousness and "political love:"

Something of the nature of this political love can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*) or that of home (*heimet* or *tanah air*). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied. [...] in everything 'natural' there is always something unchosen. In this way, nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, gender, parentage, and birth-era — all those things one can not help. (Anderson 143)

As Gellner and Balibar have shown, these apparently natural bonds of kinship and homeliness are important but also constructed or narrative indicators. While these indicators may be necessary to mobilize the growing political consciousness and cultural production of a nation, the danger lies in objectifying these indicators into determinate and exclusionary boundaries, shifting the terms from politics and culture to purity and race:

The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome

copulations: outside history. [...] The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to “blue” or “white” blood and “breeding” among aristocracies. (Anderson 149, original emphasis)

The importance of Anderson’s distinction between nationalism and racism is this: when Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, and Stuart Hall condemn nationalism as a discourse of racial purity and cultural homogeneity, what they are criticizing is actually patriotism, which is founded on racist “dreams of eternal contaminations” and which gestures back to the older divine and dynastic forms of kinship and sovereignty that are “outside history.” While this patriotic, racial and cultural discourse is undeniably present in many nation-states, it can often be linked to the difference between official nationalism and popular nationalism; the former “concealed a discrepancy between nation and dynastic realm” (Anderson 110) and tries to legitimate political power in terms of race and lineage, whereas the latter arises from the conjunction of vernacular print languages, print capitalism’s dissemination of national and world events, as well as the political “pilgrimage[s]” or careers and social experiences of those under colonial administrative rule (Anderson 57).

To sum up, Anderson’s elaboration of nationalism moves us away from the dominant conceptualization of nationalism as a determinate racial, linguistic or religious identity, and helps us rethink it as a stylized representation of the conjunction between industrialization and print culture, anti-colonial political consciousness, and the narrative repetition of seminal events through cultural and literary texts. Partha Chatterjee has criticized Anderson’s discussion of modular nationalism as relegating the former colonies to the position of “perpetual consumers of modernity” because their nationalisms are adapted from those of “Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects

of history" (5). Chatterjee argues, in contrast, that "anticolonial nationalism" in Africa and Asia is "posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West," and that "the difficulty [...] arises because we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a *political* movement much too literally and much too seriously" (5, original emphasis); instead of a purely political movement, Chatterjee approaches anticolonial nationalism as a combination of "material" and "spiritual" domains of struggle and resistance (6). However, this material-spiritual characterization actually corresponds with the political-cultural congruence that Gellner, Balibar, and Anderson, in their various ways, have elaborated; for them, as well as for Chatterjee, nationalism is a correspondence between politics and culture rather than a solely political or cultural entity. The charge of Eurocentrism and belated modernity that Chatterjee levels at Anderson (and, by extension, other Western scholars of nationalism like Gellner and Balibar) carries less weight once we consider the similarities between European and postcolonial conceptualizations of nationalism⁴. Rather than thinking of nationalism in Europe as a precedent that the rest of the world must adopt or adapt, I would like to think of European and postcolonial nationalisms as contrapuntal and intertwined discourses, since "in a sense, every modern nation is a product of colonization: it has always been to some degree colonized or colonizing, and sometimes both at the same time" (Balibar 135). To that end, I now turn to the intertwining of cultural criticism and political consciousness in the work of Raymond Williams and Theodor Adorno, as well as that of Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Paul Gilroy.

⁴ Neil Lazarus offers a convincing rebuttal to Chatterjee's charge by analyzing how Chatterjee's and Anderson's readings of nationalism and postcolonialism are actually closely aligned rather than oppositional. See Lazarus (1999), pp. 129-133.

Postcolonial Nationalism: Residual Social Formation and Negative Dialectic

Postcolonial criticism has always been conscious and critical of the transnational framework and politico-cultural flows. With its interrogation of the ways in which colonialism, capitalism, and official nationalisms are predicated on racial and cultural homogeneity, “the postcolonial” can still be a productive field of thought even as we expand our reading horizons to the symbolic and literary interrelationships crisscrossing the globe. In other words, we do not need to think past the postcolonial or the national in order to apprehend or critique globalization. Drawing on Raymond Williams’s structuration of residual and dominant social elements and Theodor Adorno’s ideas of the negative dialectic, we can better understand the role of culture in the shifting relationship between nationalism, postcolonialism, and globalism. I articulate postcolonial thinking by Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said, and Paul Gilroy along with Williams’s and Adorno’s cultural critique to elucidate two significant points about national consciousness and culture. These theorists contest globalism’s objectification of nationalism and culture into a binary opposition that subordinates one term within the other. Their critiques make visible the productive relationships that are possible when the two terms are placed in a critical contradiction that informs and revises either term instead of identifying them in a subject-object binary. In analyzing and rethinking the positive connections between culture and nationalism, I am not dismissing the importance of ethnic and racial identities, the idea of popular and elite culture, the field of cultural studies, nor am I denying that many diasporic communities around the world have been and are still marginalized and endangered by nation-states.

Rather, to use the analytical terms of Raymond Williams and Theodor Adorno, my project rethinks, as a negative dialectic, the relationship between the dominant discourse of culture and the residual discourse of nationalism. This qualifies globalization's reification of both culture and nationalism without reconciling all three terms into a triumphant totality. For Williams, in most social formations, the residual has been "formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process [...] as an effective element of the present," such that "certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue [...] of some previous social and cultural institution or formation" (122). The position and function of the residual is double-edged, because, on the one hand, some of its overlooked aspects "may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture," whereas, on the other hand, its more visible aspects (what Williams calls its "active manifestation") have been "wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture" (122). Williams's formulation is extremely productive for thinking about nationalism and literary representations of national consciousness within globalization. Certainly, the active manifestation of nationalism in the guise of the nation-state is increasingly incorporated by the discourse of globalism as the authoritarian and homogenizing monolith that must be contested by culture's heterogeneous and liberating hybridity. But at the same time, the aspects of nationalism that are aligned with cultural plurality have often been overlooked. Geopolitically speaking, nations continue to provide a framework for cultures to survive and flourish, and a group's declaration that it has a national culture (in both popular and elite registers) is a performative act that signals that group's participation in modernity (Jusdanis 7). Within the register of elite culture and the

discipline of literary studies, the fields often designated as postcolonial, world, and comparative literatures are still organized along national lines, even if the general intention of these fields is to foster cross-cultural and transnational perspectives on literature (Szeman 26-27). The persistence of nationalism on these two levels may be thought of in terms of the oppositional aspects of the residual as discussed by Raymond Williams: nationalism continues to be “lived and practised” through and to express “experiences, meanings, and values” that cannot be “substantially verified” or accounted for under the dominant terms of globalism.

Thinking of nationalism as a salient residual force opposing the global rhetoric of culture helps us reconfigure the dominant dichotomy between nationalism and culture into what Theodor Adorno calls a negative dialectic. Drawing on the discussion of theories of global and transnational cultural flows at the beginning of this chapter, let me summarize globalism attempts to resolve the relationship between nationalism and culture in two ways: first, by subordinating culture to nationalism and identifying the resulting national culture as monolithic and centripetal; second, by making nationalism secondary to culture, creating a postnationalism defined as inherently centrifugal and that makes nationalism obsolete. In this situation, the global administration of culture in both senses of lived experienced and expert learning hypostatizes culture into a category such that “culture — no matter what form it takes — is to be measured by norms not inherent to it and which have nothing to do with the quality of the object [under analysis]” (Adorno, “Culture and Administration” 113). But considering nationalism and culture in terms of a negative dialectic means thinking of them as interrelated constellations that are not conflated with or subordinated to each other, because Adorno’s specific use of the astronomical term (constellation) signifies “a juxtaposed

rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (Jay 14-15). In a negative dialectic, "objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" – the concept that occupies the subject position and would normally assume priority over the object "does not exhaust the thing conceived" (Adorno, "Negative Dialectics" 57). In other words, there is no smooth reconciliation and synthesis between subject/thesis and object/antithesis because the encounter between the two terms breaks down the apparent unity of each term, thereby revealing the multiple, constitutive parts within them. This is what Adorno means when he argues that a negative dialectic brings critical "insight into the constitutive character of the nonconceptual in the concept [that] would end the compulsive identification which the concept brings" (Adorno, "Negative Dialectics" 63). This means that in a negative dialectic, neither culture nor nationalism achieves subjective primacy or becomes objectively subordinate. The importance of this for my project is that nationalism need not be compulsively identified with homogeneity and authoritarianism; culture need not be absolutely defined in terms of heterogeneity and radicalism. From this perspective, "national culture" is not a holistic concept but marks an encounter between nationalism and culture that reveals the negotiation or the striving for congruence between a community's political aspirations and its vernacular and "high" culture. Nationalism as political consciousness and cultural critique is not an absolute concept of culture determined by the dictates of official, state-driven national identities. Rather, it is a conjunction between the two constellations of politics and culture that keeps them distinct but related on political, social, symbolic, and artistic levels.

By reading literary representations of nationalism as critical, evocative fragments instead of direct expressions of pre-existing nationalism and culture, I revise and extend the idea of postcolonial literature as national allegory (Jameson 1986) using Theodor Adorno's understanding of literature as a crystallization of historical and social processes. A literary text's "immanent, crystallized" rendering of the relational process between nationalism and culture (Adorno, "Aesthetic Theory" 180) means that it will point out new possibilities and conjunctions between the two that have not been recognized by the dominant discourse of globalism. While Jameson's formulation has received much criticism for reducing the complexity of postcolonial writing to a straightforward analogy between literature and nationalism⁵, it nonetheless helps us "to consider the concept of the nation [...] not as a pregiven, preunderstood political formation, but as a theoretical problematic" that enables "a mode of interpretation of postcolonial texts that focuses on [the texts'] collective, political dimension" within this national problematic (Szeman, 62, 47). Revising the terms of national allegory using Adorno's thinking, the "monadic" condition of the artwork signals its distance from the pre-existing, empirical reality, while the artwork's connection to this reality is still maintained because it is "an element of an overarching context of the spirit of an epoch, entwined with history and society" (*Aesthetic Theory* 179-180). Locating literature as an element entwined in the interrelated constellations of nationalism and culture allows us to read the literary text as a conjunctive point in the interrelating process between national consciousness and cultural plurality. For Adorno, because the artwork is "both the result of the process and the process itself at a standstill [...] at once a force field and

⁵ See Aijaz Ahmad (1987) for an assessment of Jameson's concept. Although Jameson emphasizes in his original essay that by the term "allegory" he did not mean a one-to-one correspondence between literary figures and national characteristics, most people have treated the term in this light.

a thing" (*Aesthetic Theory* 179), literature's imaginative potential is not exhausted by its adherence to the formal conventions of literary genre nor the political and social circumstances within which it is created. Literature distinguishes itself from lived reality as an artifact, a thing of stylized form and language, and this thingness creates a force field of tense but intimate relation in which the norms of lived reality both inform and are critiqued by the literary text. By using this force field of formal artifice and affective language, literature interrupts the reification of nationalism and culture as binary opposites brought on by globalization. Because literature is itself a discursive field, these interventions occur as discursive moves and strategies rather than the creation of positive subjectivities or blueprints for political action,

Fanon, Said, and Spivak: National Consciousness, Counterpoint, and Catachresis

To reconfigure the dichotomy of culture versus nationalism, we must examine the negative dialectic of productive linkages between culture's plurality and nationalism in the form of national consciousness. For Frantz Fanon, successful decolonization requires culture's close association with nationalism as political consciousness, which he distinguishes from official or bourgeois nationalism: "If culture is the expression of national consciousness [...] it is the national consciousness which is the most elaborate form of culture" (243). In his essay on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," Fanon emphasizes the collective involvement of the people in the process of national liberation against the co-optation of this process by the national bourgeoisie, who will have "nothing to do with transforming the nation" but instead become "the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism" (152). What Fanon describes may be interpreted, in the

terms of my project, as the objectification of nationalism and culture as (respectively) homogeneous and heterogeneous identities under the spell of late capitalism and globalization. Under these conditions, Fanon argues, with reference to political problems in the Ivory Coast, “from nationalism we have passed to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism” (156) – an evaluation that suggests a correspondence with Anderson’s distinction between nationalism and patriotic racism, as well as the possibility for a radical and liberating nationalism that is not wholly determined by the national bourgeoisie or the needs of global capital. This alternative form of liberating nationalism is conceptualized in his essay “On National Culture,” where Fanon defines national culture as that awareness and articulation of “the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence” (233). Literature, then, may be thought of as part of this collective effort to represent the creation and maintenance of this nationalist action, but Fanon is careful not to dictate that literature must be about the masses or explicitly depict radical struggle against oppression. The idea of the people in this passage arguably extends to and includes the middle class itself, because the massive and collective effort described here must draw on “the dynamic, pioneer aspect, the characteristics of the inventor and of the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies,” albeit “lamentably absent” in the middle class of the African countries he observes (153).

The writers whose work I discuss in this project are all of middle class backgrounds, but, understood in Fanon’s terms, their class background does not automatically make them victims of a false consciousness or complicit with the exploiting power of late capital. I want to emphasize instead the dynamic and

innovative aspects of literary writing that Fanon points out in relation to the political and cultural negotiations that undergird postcolonial nationalism. Fanon further argues that the popular register of culture (the culture of “the people”) must be balanced by an equal emphasis on the role of elite or “high” culture in the national consciousness: “the native man of culture” (and the use of culture here connotes cultivated learning) has “a global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation, whose culture merely, after all, represents one aspect of that nation” (232-233). This global responsibility is located at the very heart of national consciousness and national culture, echoed in Fanon’s famous phrase that “national consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension” (247). The implications of Fanon’s thinking challenge the dichotomy between pluralistic cultures and monolithic nationalism on two levels. At one level, nationalism in Fanon’s terms is formed out of both registers of culture: as lived experiences that maintain a community’s existence, and as learned expertise that is the “man of culture’s” responsibility — national consciousness is therefore constituted by the plurality of culture, and is itself the “most elaborate” formal framework that allows culture to consolidate without being reduced to official nationalism. Culture in decolonizing nationalism should be seen as a mediating force between communities that helps them define themselves and relate to one another rather than a purely defensive, insular gesture. The term “national culture” that carries homogenous overtones is actually a productive and positive interrelationship of popular and elite culture together with nationalism, for it “provides an unfolding map for the nation’s future as well as an archive of its history” (Jusdanis 7). Furthermore, the international dimension of national consciousness reminds us that for many decolonizing nations, formal independence and the achievement of nationhood after

World War II meant entry into a world-system already populated by other sovereign nation-states and enmeshed in global capital. Postcolonial nationalism is therefore always already relational in a global framework, for the creation of national entities often involve “an appeal to what other nations were *not*, or at least, *not yet*” (Szeman 16, original emphasis). Nationalism as international national consciousness therefore shares some of the important fluid, mobile, and positional characteristics of culture celebrated by critics of nationalism.

If culture turns out to be more intimately linked to nationalism than the dominant discourse of globalism makes it out to be, the same can be said of the diasporic subject. The extension of the diasporic condition onto a metaphorical level for cultural and literary analysis often ignores the national consciousness that link these diasporas to *both* their homelands and their hostlands. As I discussed earlier, Stuart Hall’s essay on “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” serves as a good example of the metaphorical rather than a literal use of the term “diaspora” that has been popularized in contemporary cultural and literary studies. But this metaphorical register presupposes an absolutist, homogenizing account of national culture that I have challenged. Furthermore, diasporas are not necessarily opposed to the nation or national consciousness; their consciousness of themselves as deterritorialized or marginalized communities arises precisely out of their connections with their homeland and their host country — both of which are nation-states. Globalization and mass migrations reshape the connections between diasporas and their home- and hostlands, but they do not revoke them: diasporas may serve as “an example, for both the homeland’s and hostland’s nation-states, of the possibility of living [...] in the regimes of multiplicity which are increasingly the global condition” (Tölölyan, “Rethinking” 7). In many cases the

activities of diasporic communities mark a conceptual “re-turn” towards the nation rather than a physical return to the homeland (Tölölyan, “Rethinking” 14-15). In view of this, we should balance Hall’s provocative claim that metaphorizing the idea of diaspora as cultural hybridity radically de-nationalizes the term with the recognition that diasporic cultural, artistic, and literary expressions may be critical evocations and reflections upon the national consciousness of both homeland and hostland rather than narrow professions of patriotism.

These critical expressions of national consciousness from both within and without the nation is crucial for a society that wishes “to avoid regression” and marks an extension “from national consciousness to political and social consciousness” (Fanon 203) that does not cancel out or negate the idea of nationalism. Fanon’s wariness towards official nationalism’s consolidation of nationalism into an identity or a dogma corresponds to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s injunction that “a paradigm for the thought of history” in “the geopolitical postcolonial situation” must correct the “new U.S. pedagogy of the ‘Third World.’” (65) For Spivak the Third World becomes an objective category and an identity used by both U.S. imperialism and global capital, discourses that “produce too uncritical a celebration of the ‘hybrid,’ which inadvertently legitimizes the ‘pure’ by reversal,” a celebration that elides the problem that “there is no historically available authentic [...] point of view that can now step forth [...] and reclaim its rightful place in the narrative of world history” (65). In contrast to Bhabha, who argues that the disruption of national time and space through migrant and diasporic figures has a salutary effect, Spivak cautions us that “in the New World Order — or hot peace — the hyphen between nation and state comes looser than usual; and that in that gap fundamentalisms fester” (374). In other words, although Bhabha’s postnationalist

discourse inserts a figure of cultural hybridity between the nation and the state to transform them into a nation-space, it becomes possible for the mirror image of that hybrid cultural figure — the essentialist, authentic native — to occupy that space in the name of cultural identity.

Spivak, like Fanon, argues that nationalism is an incomplete process that does not end even with globalization and global culture. But Spivak's deconstructionist approach focuses on the productive aporia of nationalism: the impossibility of successfully achieving a complete national identity, and the imbrication of nationalist impulses with language and politics. This is evident from her discussion of J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, where the protagonist, Susan Barton, tries to teach Friday to read and write:

One of the words Barton tries to teach Friday is *Africa*. This effort is rich in meaning and its limits. The metropolitan anti-imperialist cannot teach the native the proper name of his nation or continent. [...] Africa, a Roman name for what the Greeks called "Libya," itself perhaps a latinization of the name of the Berber tribe Aourigha (perhaps pronounced "Afarika"), is a metonym that points to a great indeterminacy: the mysteriousness of the space upon which we are born. Africa is only a timebound naming; like all proper names it is a mark with an arbitrary connection to its referent, a catachresis. The earth as temporary dwelling has no foundational name. Nationalism can only ever be a crucial political agenda against oppression. All longings to the contrary, it cannot provide the absolute guarantee of identity. (188)

Spivak uses "catachresis," a strained or an unexpected use of a word or term in a seemingly inappropriate context, in order to trace the necessity of nationalism (understood as the ascription of a proper name to a nation or continent), as well as the inevitable slippages and deferrals that these "timebound naming[s]" produce — the various names of "Africa" in Latin, Greek, and Berber are always inadequate to the "mysteriousness of the space" itself. While this is a classic deconstructionist strategy, we

might better understand Spivak's shift from a literary to a political register at the end of this passage in terms of Theodor Adorno's negative dialectic, where "objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" and the concept occupying the subject position does not completely cancel out the object nor does it "exhaust the thing conceived" (Adorno, "Negative Dialectics" 57). Hence, Spivak's treatment of Africa as an example of nationalism's catachresis confounds not only the anti-imperialist's ascription of proper names for metropolitan purposes, but also the figuration of a historically available authentic point of view for nativist ambitions from my earlier discussion. The encounter between nationalism and culture ("the earth as temporary dwelling") cannot be resolved in terms of an "absolute guarantor of identity" — or, as Adorno might say, "it indicates the untruth of identity" ("Negative Dialectics" 57). Instead, the remainder that is produced from this encounter is "a crucial political agenda against oppression," a negation of both the authoritarianism of the state and the exploitation of global capital.

Spivak elaborates on this crucial political agenda in order to challenge the "fundamentalist nationalism" that "arises in the loosened hyphen between nation and state as the latter is mortgaged further and further by the forces of financialization, although the determinations are never clear" (364). This oppressive nationalism brought about by the neo-colonial state in league with global capital is partly due to globalization's objectification of culture and nationalism as essentially opposed identity positions. To challenge this, Spivak proposes the development of "transnational literacy" that does not, despite its name, transcend nationalism, because transnational literacy involves rethinking the position of Third World immigrants and diasporic subjects in the West as "*possible* agents of exploitation, not its victims" and focuses on

the connections between homeland and hostland: “the idea that the nation-state that they now call home gives “aid” to the nation-state that they still call culture” (357, original emphasis). Spivak’s intention is not to do away with the objectification of culture and nationalism, but to work through it such that “our use of the word “culture,” will name a different strategic situation from *only* our own desire to be the agent of a developed civil society” (357-358). This strategic situation, arising out of a critique of nationalism and culture, is what Frantz Fanon describes as “the global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation” that is borne by “the native man of culture” (247). An immanent critique of national culture, working through rather than outside of the binary opposition of nationalism and culture framed by globalization, holds the promise of a transnational literacy — a “global girdling” (Spivak 357) that reveals the mutually constitutive relationships between nationalism and culture as “a moving base [...] of differences” (Spivak 363) both in one geographical location as well as between countries, people, and places around the world.

Fanon’s emphasis on national culture as a mediating term between the national consciousness of different communities, as well as Spivak’s strategic interrogation of culture that exposes the interrelation of nationalism and globalization, parallel Edward Said’s understanding of culture within a national framework as an incomplete and continuous process rather than an authentic source of identity. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said employs the concept of musical counterpoint to describe the dynamics of culture between various peoples and places:

we are dealing with the formation of cultural identities understood not as essentializations (although part of their enduring appeal is that they seem and are considered to be like essentializations) but as contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions [...] (52)

Said's use of the terms "opposites, negatives, oppositions" recalls Adorno's idea of a negative dialectic where neither term is subjectively dominant or objectively subordinated; instead, "various themes play off each other, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one," and the varying connections between the various components create "concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work" (51). Placed in the context of globalism and nationalism, Said's methodology suggests that we should not regard globalization as a first principle or a "formal principle outside the work" from which we deduce the relations between various national cultures, but rather our attention should be drawn to the "organized interplay that derives from the themes." In other words, our sense of the global emerges inductively from the interplay between nationalism and culture in one location, and from the interplay between a national culture in one location with others around the world — hence Said's emphasis on "contrapuntal *ensembles*" rather than binaries or pairs.

Therefore, despite his reputation as a "rootless cosmopolitan" (Judt 2004), Said suggests, with qualifications, that nationalism is still necessary, even in the growing climate of globalization, as a way of mobilizing radical political change, or, in Said's own words, one of the "themes of resistance culture" (209). The problem, for Said, is not that "many newly independent nation-states in the postcolonial world have succeeded in re-establishing the primacy of what have been called imagined communities," but rather that these communities have been "hijacked by a host of dictators and petty tyrants, enshrined in various state nationalisms" (54). To challenge this hijacking of the nation by

the authoritarian and neo-colonial state, Said turns to an intellectual and literary tradition that works both contrapuntally and residually:

Nevertheless in general there is an oppositional quality to the consciousness of many Third World scholars and intellectuals particularly (but not exclusively) those who are exiles, expatriates, refugees and immigrants in the West, many of them inheritors of the work done by earlier twentieth-century expatriates like George Antonius and C.L.R. James. Their work in trying to connect experiences across the imperial divide, in re-examining the great canons, in producing what in effect is a critical literature cannot be, and generally has not been, co-opted by the resurgent nationalisms, despotisms, and ungenerous ideologies that betrayed the liberationist ideal [...] (54)

Said no doubt sees himself as a member of the “Third World scholars and intellectuals” located in West, but without having exchanged their “oppositional quality” with a metropolitan outlook. Instead, the critical intellectual tradition he traces here, running from the nationalist writers of the early twentieth century like Antonious and James to scholars such as Said himself, is a residual one — not the “active manifestation” that “has been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture,” but an intellectual endeavor of re-examining canonical works of literature and producing a critical corpus that “may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture” and maintains the liberationist ideal (Williams 122). Said emphasizes this residual and critical nationalist intellectual tradition by scrutinizing the United States itself as both “the last superpower” but also “as a nation” (55). Said’s shift in pronoun is significant; whereas he earlier refers to Third World scholars and intellectuals in the third person, in discussing the United States and his own position within it just one page later, he assumes the first person plural:

we face as a nation the deep, profoundly perturbed and perturbing question of our relationship to others [...] We are, so to speak, *of* the connections, not outside and beyond them. And it behooves us as intellectuals and humanists and secular critics to understand the United

States in the world of nations and power from *within* the actuality, as participants in it, not detached outside observers [...]. (55-56, original emphasis)

The shift in pronoun is arguably a sign of Said's own national consciousness as a longtime resident of and intellectual working in the United States. By acknowledging the critical and residual strand of Third World nationalism in the earlier passage, and then exhorting his fellow "intellectuals and humanists and secular critics" in the United States to "understand the United States in the world of nations and power," Said illustrates Frantz Fanon's understanding of national consciousness as an international dimension rather than as a nativist or cultural identity. Said's cosmopolitanism (if the term is even appropriate here) is certainly not rootless. It is rooted in the cross-hatching of multiple political and cultural congruencies, formed out of manifold connections between countries, peoples, and places, as well as the need for criticism to take place *within* these connections — all these suggest that nationalism involves the interplay of national consciousness and culture as what Adorno calls a constellation, or (to use Martin Jay's gloss), "a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (Jay 14-15).

My elaboration of Said's critical stance in *Culture and Imperialism* as a cross-hatching of the consciousness of multiple nations and cultures resembles Paul Gilroy's discussion in *The Black Atlantic* of a "rhizomorphic, fractal structure" connecting people and places in a "transcultural, international formation," which he finds "antithetical" to the "nationalistic focus" shared by black British and African American cultural studies critics (4). Gilroy's project stems from his dissatisfaction with these critics, whom he argues share "an equally volkish popular cultural nationalism" and "absolutist

conceptions of cultural difference allied to a cultural understanding of ‘race’ and ethnicity” (15). However, Gilroy often conflates nationalism with race and ethnicity, such as when he calls for a departure from “nationalist or ethnically absolute approaches” to studies of black culture (15), or when he contrasts “hidden expressions, both residual and emergent” of “global or outer-national” culture against “national, nationalistic, and ethnically absolute paradigms of cultural criticism” (16). In light of my discussion of both European and postcolonial theories of nationalism, we might better understand cultural nationalism as cultural *patriotism*, a patriotism promoted by official nationalism that tries to create a “mystification” of racial purity and a “misplaced idea of a national interest [that] gets invoked as a means to silence dissent and censor political debate” (Gilroy 33). Read in this way, Gilroy is certainly correct in criticizing those mystificatory notions that point back towards an illusory dynastic or racial origin, but once nations are no longer only defined in terms of race or ethnicity, then the role that nationalism plays in Gilroy’s larger argument about transculturation and internationalism comes into question. As Yogita Goyal points out, Gilroy’s emphasis on a diasporic black consciousness as a cultural fluidity or mobility implies “a notion of stasis and fixity, which comes to be located in Africa” (8). Modernity only happens in Britain and the United States, whereas Africa and Africans become metaphors or figures of speech; “*The Black Atlantic* [...] largely focuses on the transcendence of modernity rather than on attempts to transform it to be more inclusive. Africa plays no part in these deliberations” (Goyal 11).

Let me suggest that one way of reconciling Goyal’s questions about African (and, on a more general level, postcolonial) modernity in *The Black Atlantic* with Gilroy’s thinking is to draw on European and postcolonial theorizations of nationalism,

especially Edward Said's distinction between nationalism as political consciousness, national culture as cultural production, and nativism as patriotism in the guise of racial or cultural purity. Once we understand nationalism as a means by which the formerly colonized participate in and claim their place in modernity, then nationalism no longer serves as the limiting framework that needs to be crossed over or crossed out in order for us to understand the rhizomorphic or fractal structure of diasporic flows. If we apply the insights drawn from the rethinking of nationalism by both European and postcolonial theorists onto this passage in which Gilroy summarizes his project, we can see how national and transnational political and cultural flows can be complementary rather than contradictory:

The specificity of the modern political and cultural formation I want to call the black Atlantic can be defined, on one level, through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity. These desires are relevant to understanding political organising and cultural criticism. They have always sat uneasily alongside the strategic choices forced on black movements and individuals embedded in national political cultures and nation states in America, the Caribbean, and Europe. (19)

Gilroy's analysis of novels by black writers and black hip-hop music argues convincingly for political and cultural connections between societies on both sides of the Atlantic. But at the same time, the embeddedness of "black movements and individuals" in "national political cultures" need not be as limiting or homogenizing as Gilroy makes it out to be, especially if we understand nationalism (in Gellner's terms) as political and cultural congruence rather than identity, or (in Balibar's and Anderson's terms) as already harboring ex-centric, transnational, or outer-national connections to begin with, connections that exist within the logic of colonial and nationalist discourses and do not have to be forced upon them by diaspora or globalization. Furthermore, we may also

think of the “strategic choices” Gilroy mentions in light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s catachrestic treatment of nationalism and culture in her reading of *Foe*, a strategically staged crisis that exposes how, instead of transcending the structures of the nation state, we can revise our understanding of nationalism into “crucial political agenda against oppression” rather than “the absolute guarantee of identity” (188). The contrapuntal interplay between the constellation of national consciousness and culture in one geographical location and between that national constellation and those of other people and places around the world produces our awareness of the global, rather than the generative first principle of transnational capital flows or worldwide demographic movements.

The persistence of nationalism as political and cultural congruence, negotiated within and mutually constitutive with inter- or transnationalism, and challenging while at the same time inextricable from the globalization of capital and culture, is what I call residual nationalism. In the chapters that follow, I discuss how Kazuo Ishiguro, Derek Walcott, and Shirley Geok-lin Lim illustrate this residual nationalism in their writing by engaging with specific concepts that represent absolute or determinate national or cultural identities. Kazuo Ishiguro interrogates the British idea of “national heritage” embodied both in that country’s heritage industry and the literary resurgence of what Suzanne Keen calls the romance of the archive. Derek Walcott evokes dominant figures of “diasporic hybridity” and the Caribbean as a deterritorialized space of migrant cultural identities, but shows us how diaspora and migrancy are created through an engagement with nationalism rather than by transcending nationalism’s political and cultural critique. Finally, Shirley Geok-lin Lim focuses on the materiality of women’s physical selves and the reproduction of mixed-race children to challenge what Rey

Chow calls “coercive mimeticism” (107) underlying the official postcolonial nationalism of Malaysia and Singapore that determines national identity in terms of purity of race and language.

* * *

CHAPTER TWO

“AN EXAGGERATED VERSION OF THIS BUTTONED-UP STUFF”: RESIDUAL NATIONALISM AND LATE STYLE IN KAZUO ISHIGURO’S NOVELS

Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro is a British writer whose novels have been acclaimed as diasporic, international, or cosmopolitan, and Ishiguro’s own Japanese-British cultural hybridity has often been lauded as the basis of his transnational perspectives. I suggest, however, that Ishiguro offers a “residual nationalism” — a term I have derived from the work of Raymond Williams — by staging national and cultural markers in such a way that challenges our notions of fixed identities as well as the prevailing idea that nationalism is an authoritarian antagonist of radical culture. In particular, Ishiguro reworks two tropes prevalent in modern and contemporary British literature that, along with Britain’s burgeoning heritage industry, suggest the prevalence of a determinate national heritage: first, the “condition-of-England” narrative and fiction’s cultural-ethnographic turn discussed by Jed Esty; second, what Suzanne Keen calls the romance of the archive.

In this chapter I focus on *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* because they exemplify Ishiguro’s literary and discursive revisioning of nationalism and culture. *The Remains of the Day*, which won the Booker Prize in 1989, is often taken as a “condition-of-England” novel, a meditation on the nation’s postimperial decline in geopolitics and a parable about the dangers of unswerving professional loyalty. *The Unconsoled*, published six years after *The Remains of the Day*, is often described as a culturally European novel. It was initially received as a puzzling failure by critics such as James

Wood, who claims the novel “invented its own category of badness” (Wood 44), but it has since been recuperated as extending the problem of professionalism in *The Remains of the Day* onto a cosmopolitan level.

My reading uses Raymond Williams’ structuration of residual and dominant social elements and Theodor Adorno’s ideas of the negative dialectic and late style to account for Ishiguro’s revisions of national and cultural tropes. Furthermore, by drawing on Williams’ and Adorno’s thinking, I am elaborating — on a literary register — my contention in Chapter One that nationalism is neither a homogeneous nor static identity, but a process whereby a community negotiates an amenable congruence between its culture and a political system. However, given the current conditions of late capitalism and the global culture industry, in which national and cultural icons and identity are consumed and circulated as objects, I argue that Ishiguro’s novels elucidate two significant points about national consciousness and culture. They contest globalism’s objectification of nationalism and culture such that they either appear to be opposed to each other, or one term is given greater priority than the other. This critique makes visible the productive relationships that are possible when the two terms are placed in a critical contradiction that informs and revises either term instead of identifying them in a subject-object binary. This reformulation is important because, within the framework of globalization, culture, in both its “elite” sense of cultivated learning and “popular” sense of lived experience and practices, is often thought of as threatened by the homogenization of official nationalism. As I discussed in Chapter One, various cultural studies critics have emphasized — even valorized — “culture” as both lived experience and cultivated knowledge as inherently transnational or postnational: its heterogeneity exceeds and transcends the boundaries of the nation-state, and,

through its radicalism against the authoritarian nation-state and multinational capital, it ameliorates the excesses of economic globalization by providing a humane counterpoint to the ruthlessness of economic globalization through the figures of diasporic, migrant, or cosmopolitan subjects.

Adorno's Late Style and Ishiguro's Landscape of Imagination

However, we can rethink the various figures of national, diasporic, and cosmopolitan subjectivity frequently ascribed to Ishiguro himself and his characters by extending onto a literary register Adorno's idea of a negative dialectic and late style in music. For Adorno, Beethoven's musical works in the latter half of his career "are commonly not round but furrowed or even torn. [...] They exhibit more of history than of growth" ("Beethoven's Late Style" 295). In applying the idea of "late style" to Ishiguro's work, however, I do not suggest that Ishiguro has reached the final phase of his career as a writer, since he has published two more novels (*When We Were Orphans* and *Never Let Me Go*) since *The Unconsoled*. I do contend, however, that Adorno's thinking is productive because *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* mark a shift in Ishiguro's literary style and his conceptualization of how narratives represent or intervene in our lived reality. While Adorno cautions against understanding late style as precisely the expression of an artist's own personality or subjectivity, Ishiguro's comments in an interview not long after *The Unconsoled* was published suggest that his writerly "subjectivity" does not "break through the smooth surface of form in order to express itself" (Adorno, "Late Style" 295). Ishiguro attempts to "purify the clichés" of cultural and national identity "of control by subjective spirit" and subject these "to a series of shocks" (Adorno, "Late Style" 298), thereby creating what he calls "a landscape

of imagination" (Krider 151) rather than a landscape or territory determined by cultural or ethnic homogeneity and national heritage. In writing *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro remarks how his "cautious nature" and meticulous planning of themes and characters caused "the targets and aims [he'd] written down at the planning stage [to be] fulfilled," but at the same time he also began to question whether he himself as a writer is using Stevens's stifling and controlled voice because he was "afraid of losing control in the writing process" (Krider 161). Hence his decision, when beginning *The Unconsoled*, to "write about more messy areas of [himself] and start at an earlier point, when things aren't completely mapped out," to bring to this next book "a sense of exploration, and improvisation" (Krider 161). However, I suggest that Ishiguro's subjectivity is not liberated or purified in his shift from studied prose to improvisational writing; instead, both approaches produce, in their corresponding novels, some important characteristics that Adorno discusses in late works of art. Stevens's narrative is "like an exaggerated version of this buttoned-up stuff" about English decorum and diction, a "stylized version, almost a caricature" not only of Ishiguro's own "'understated, calm" voice (Jaggi 162), but also of "a mythical England," a world "which at first resembles that of those writers such as P. G. Wodehouse" that Ishiguro "undermine[s] [...] in a slightly twisted and different way" (Vorda 14, 15). Similarly, *The Unconsoled* "is supposed to take place in some strange world" where Ryder "appropriates the people he encounters to work out parts of his life and his past" (Jaggi 164). But this appropriation does not lead to a psychological closure or clarification of Ryder's identity. Instead, Ryder's self-deception as a cosmopolitan professional — just like Stevens's own dignified demeanor as the gentleman's gentleman — is "absurdly exaggerated" (Jaggi 167) because the world of *The Unconsoled* is "a landscape of the imagination" (Krider 151), this

imagination being not just Ishiguro's but Ryder's, since it is "a world that is seen so much from the point of view of one consciousness that it very boldly appropriates things that it finds to serve its needs" (Krider 152).

Ishiguro's reflections on his own writing corresponds with Adorno's discussions about late style's formal evocations of earlier artistic conventions and tropes as a way of understanding how subjectivity is present and at the same time absent from the artwork. In late work, "formulae and phrases drawn from convention are scattered throughout. [...] the conventions become visible in a quite open, undisguised, and unmodified way" ("Late Style" 296). But these conventions are not guarantees of subjectivity, because "the power of subjectivity in late works of art is the sudden flaring up with which it abandons the work of art" ("Late Style" 297). In the wake of subjectivity's departure, the artistic conventions become "splinters, fragmented and abandoned," an "expression no longer of the isolated self but of the mythical nature of the living creature and its demise" ("Late Style" 297). Because "subjectivity communicates itself [...] only through the hollowed-out forms from which it escapes" ("Late Style" 297), subjectivity in the artwork is (to return to Raymond Williams' terms) a residual presence within the dominant structure of conventional elements, and not an incorporated presence that suffuses these conventions. This flaring up and abandonment reminds us of how the exaggerations and caricatures in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled*. In the former, Ishiguro punctures the image of a mythical England through meticulously crafted — even over-studied — rendition of English dignity and professionalism. *The Unconsoled* is concentrated so much on Ryder's point of view and his own consciousness that it displaces his role as an expert, cosmopolitan protagonist and forces us to reckon with its dream-like and allegorical landscape. Just as Adorno remarks that in late work

“Beethoven no longer gathers up the landscape, assembling it [...] into a picture,” but “irradiates it with the fire that subjectivity ignites by bursting out and colliding with the walls of the work” (“Late Style” 298), Ishiguro’s landscapes of the imagination push subjectivity (as expressed through psychological, cultural, or diasporic identities) to its limits. Despite Ishiguro’s own humanist emphasis that he tries to “write things that are universal” (Krider 154), and “not that interested in saying things about specific societies,” (Vorda 16) his discussion of his creative process and use of clichés and stereotypes suggests that his writing is more complex, critical, and specific than the all-embracing universality he explicitly avows.

The significance of late style for my purposes is that it traces how the negative dialectic of national consciousness and culture may function in Ishiguro’s writing. The protagonists of Ishiguro’s two novels are subjective positions: Stevens the butler is a figure of Englishness and Ryder is a figure of the cosmopolitan professional. But these figures are also formal evocations of certain conventions in modern British fiction, in particular the ethnographic turn of the “condition-of-England” narratives and the traveling, scholarly expert in the more recent romances of the archive. They are readily identifiable, “open, undisguised” (Adorno, “Late Style” 296) figures of national and cultural identity, along with other markers such as the English country house in *The Remains of the Day* and the cloistered European city in *The Unconsoled*. But instead of reinforcing these markers as models for subjective identification, Ishiguro’s novels negate them by pushing them to their limit in order to reveal their hypostatization as identities for their own sake — this is what Adorno means by subjectivity’s “sudden flaring up” and then abandonment of the artwork. The conventional tropes of nationalism and culture evoked in Ishiguro’s novels are thus subjective figures, but

within the novels' formal logic they are neither "expression[s] of an isolated self" nor the consolidation of a sovereign subjectivity either as Englishness or cosmopolitanism. Rather, the novels rework these subjective figures as fragments pointing towards the dynamic interrelation between national consciousness and culture. These terms are reified as a binary opposition by globalization, or, in Adorno's metaphysical phrasing, "the mythical nature of the living thing and its demise" — culture, which appears to be the subjective, living expression of a community, seems to be threatened by nationalism's disciplinary and homogenizing force. Subjectivity is present in the novels, but its presence is residual, implied through the negation of the hypostatization of nationalism and culture, through the "splinters" left behind after subjectivity's departure. The power of subjectivity's residual presence is often neglected by the "psychological interpretation" of art, because "it seeks that power in the opposite direction from where it is to be found, namely, in the expression of subjectivity" instead of in the traces of its passing ("Late Style" 297). As my discussion of Ishiguro's novels later in this chapter will show, "psychological" interpretations of both *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* extrapolate a substantive subjectivity from both Stevens's and Ryder's narrations and Ishiguro's biographical status as a Japanese-British hybrid writer. The various diasporic and cosmopolitan claims that have been made about Ishiguro's novels and Ishiguro himself are symptomatic of globalization's hypostatization of culture and nationalism into binary opposites. My reading of Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled* will show, on the contrary, how both novels "exhibit more of history than of growth" (to use Adorno's phrase), as they unfold through a series of flashbacks, detours, clichés and stereotypes. The specificity of Ishiguro's late style, his literary reworking of historical cultural conventions and national stereotypes as

fragments, allows us to glimpse the residual but productive relation of national consciousness and culture.

Ishiguro's "Britishness" and "Japaneseness": A Startling Juxtaposition, Cosmopolitan Writer, or Diasporic Subject?

If culture turns out to be more intimately linked to nationalism than the dominant discourse of globalism makes it out to be, the same can be said of the diasporic subject. To reiterate a point from my first chapter, the extension of the diasporic condition onto a metaphorical level for cultural and literary analysis often ignores the national consciousness that link these diasporas to *both* their homelands and their hostlands, an omission that informs Kazuo Ishiguro's ascription as a Japanese-British yet cosmopolitan writer. The metaphorical rather than literal use of the term "diaspora" has given it — and the corresponding notion of diasporic culture — a radical and transnational gloss. But this metaphorical register presupposes a definition of nationalism as a social formation that homogenizes culture and makes race, ethnicity, or religion the essence of its determinate identity. But diasporas are not necessarily opposed to the nation or national consciousness; their consciousness of themselves as deterritorialized or marginalized communities arises precisely out of their connections with their homeland and their host country — both of which are nation-states. Globalization and mass migrations reshape the connections between diasporas and their home- and hostlands, but they do not revoke them. Hence, we should balance provocative claims (such as those by Stuart Hall) that metaphorizing the idea of diaspora as cultural hybridity radically de-nationalizes the term with the recognition that diasporic cultural, artistic, and literary expressions may be critical evocations and

reflections upon the national consciousness of both homeland and hostland rather than narrow professions of patriotism. In reading Ishiguro's novels according to Theodor Adorno's conceptualization of the artwork, we can see how his novels are conjunctual points in the interrelating process between national consciousness and cultural plurality, because (on one hand) the artwork is connected to its socio-cultural conditions of possibility as "an element of an overarching context of the spirit of an epoch, entwined with history and society" (*Aesthetic Theory* 179-180), but (on the other hand), because the artwork is "both the result of the process and the process itself at a standstill [...] at once a force field and a thing" (*Aesthetic Theory* 179), a thing of stylized form and language, Ishiguro's writing also arrests and interrupts the reification of nationalism and culture in Britain, which is brought about by globalization. Since the artwork is a forcefield not only of its own internal symbols and logic but also of its socio-cultural conditions, Ishiguro's reception in Britain and his own reflections on his role as a writer can be invaluable for my analysis.

Born in Nagasaki, Japan but living in Britain since the age of six, Kazuo Ishiguro won the Booker Prize in 1989 for his third novel, *The Remains of the Day*. His works consistently appear on the shortlist for this prestigious literary award; just as consistent is the recurring curiosity about his background as a British national with a Japanese name and East Asian features. From the start of his literary career to the present day, many interviews with Ishiguro dwell to varying extents on his "Japaneseness": his childhood in Nagasaki, his parents' relocation to Britain, his first visit to Japan as an adult after winning the Booker Prize, and the authenticity and artificiality of Japanese society and the Japanese characters in his first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* and *An Artist of the Floating World*. Ishiguro's cultural Japaneseness is often highlighted and

contrasted with his Britishness, and this fascination with Ishiguro's hybrid diasporic Japaneseness-cum-British nationality is sometimes expressed in bizarre ways. For example, one interviewer specifically mentions Ishiguro's bemusement at a hotel's inclusion of green tea, Japanese ink drawings, and a Japanese-language phone directory in his guest room, and then draws our attention to how Ishiguro is actually British and does not know how to read Japanese (Krider 146); another focuses on the "startling juxtaposition" of Ishiguro's face "with its broad Oriental planes and features" and his "clipped British accent," and remarks that this juxtaposition makes his stature as an emerging and talented young writer all the more remarkable (Vorda and Herzinger 4). To use Raymond Williams' terms, these interviewers' recurring fascination with Ishiguro's lack of Japaneseness together with their affirmations of his British nationality suggest that, in this context, Japaneseness has become an active manifestation of a residual nationalism incorporated into the dominant framework of global culture. Ishiguro's lack of Japaneseness becomes a gain for Britishness, because Japan, instead of signifying a national consciousness or national identity, is commodified as a transnational cultural supplement that is incorporated into British national identity, and thus makes British literature more interesting and remarkable.

The discourse of globalism treats Ishiguro as a diasporic Japanese who crosses over Japanese national boundaries (he is not a Japanese citizen), but whose very lack of authentic Japaneseness (not reading and speaking the Japanese language) allows him to be incorporated into a British national identity defined as multicultural and international. Ishiguro has been hailed as part of a generation of British writers who express "a new internationalism" (King 193). In these terms, Ishiguro's Japaneseness is authenticated by artistic and cultural comparisons: his writing style is akin to "the deft

brushwork of Japanese paintings” and “the way Japanese conversations move politely around the matter at issue” (King 207). According to this globalist perspective, Ishiguro’s cultural but non-national Japaneseness enables him, along with others of this new generation to “criticise the Third World both as insiders and as Westerners” (King 209) by showing “the contrast between older Japanese culture and the modern Westernised world” (King 206), with the implicit privileging of the latter, modernized world. More recently, Ishiguro has been acclaimed as a cosmopolitan writer who presents the rigor and busy-ness of professionalized work as part of a universal empathizing and cosmopolitan human capacity. This globalist perspective goes one step further than the earlier one by defining Ishiguro as transcultural and transnational in a literal sense: Ishiguro transcends the “blockage of emotion on an transnational scale” (Robbins 435) by rising above both the particularities of local culture and nationalism, and by “suggesting that in order to cohabit with less indecency in a world of immigrants, refugees, and strangers, [...] we need a broader and more inclusive civility” (Robbins 439-440). These readings of Ishiguro paradoxically privilege Ishiguro’s diasporic status literally and metaphorically against nationalism. In the literal sense, Ishiguro is a Japanese writer in Britain who uses his insider knowledge of Japan (despite his interviewers’ foregrounding of his lack of Japaneseness) and his position in the West to criticize his homeland. In the metaphorical sense suggested by Stuart Hall, Ishiguro’s hybrid combination of East and West becomes a politics of positioning oneself above the particularities of culture and nationalism to usher in a new form of compassionate civility in the globalized world (despite his interviewers’ avowal of his Britishness). This compassionate civility is also a form of culture that is presented as a mode of behavior rather than localized, lived experience or cultivated learning — the implication is that it

is a learned experience that only certain cosmopolitan people who are hybrids (like Ishiguro) can cultivate. In other words, this version of cosmopolitanism is still within the compass of globalism's cultural turn against nationalism.

In contrast to these claims that Ishiguro definitely a cosmopolitan writer, I suggest that Ishiguro occupies a residual and critical position towards British nationalism. In an interview between Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Oe, the renowned Japanese writer and Nobel Laureate, Ishiguro remarks that he thinks of himself as "homeless writer" who has "no obvious social role because" he "wasn't a very English Englishman" nor "a very Japanese Japanese either," and because he "had no clear role, no society or country to speak for or write about," this pushes him to "write in an international way" ("Novelist" 169). At first glance, this appears to be a classic diasporic or cosmopolitan attitude, free of national attachment. But Kenzaburo Oe points out that "in addition to being international," Ishiguro is "also very English," because "in *The Remains of the Day* [he] discovered viewpoints from which it is possible to describe both English people and Americans" ("Novelist" 170). Oe's conclusion is that "rather than being an English author or a European author," Ishiguro is "an author who writes in English," and that in "thinking of [him] in this way, as a writer of English, [Oe] had got hold of something essential" ("Novelist" 171,172). What's essential here is not an absolute national or cultural identity. Rather, it is the double sense of Ishiguro being, on one hand, an international, English-language writer; on the other hand, he is also a writer of English, who writes about Englishness and what it means to be English today, and this "writing of English" can be both a description as well as a critical appraisal of nationalism. Ishiguro's residual nationalism responds to two important tropes in twentieth-century British literature that construct national identity as cultural

insiderism. First, the anthropological or ethnographic turn in late Modernism described by Jed Esty, and second, the romance of the archive discussed by Suzanne Keen. Both these tropes emphasize the recovery of an essential national identity out of (in the first case) the customs and cultures of ordinary people as well as (in the second case) historical documents and archives. At the social and cultural levels, Ishiguro is also responding to the British government's official heritage industry, as seen in the establishment of the Department of National Heritage in 1992. This Department is "responsible not only for the arts and for historic monuments, but also for tourism" (Stevenson 1992). In other words, this Department identifies symbols and icons that embody national culture, and also makes these icons available for circulation and consumption within global capital.

At the same time, Ishiguro's writing of Englishness can also be understood as interrogating the concept of "race relations" that have emerged in British politics and society since the 1970s. Race relations is a framework established for "the national accommodation of 'non-white' immigration" into Britain and sets up "a social equation in 'British' common sense between draconian, racialized immigration controls and good or harmonious 'race-relations'" (Hesse 7). While this shift in the definition of multiculturalism in British society may help "minority ethnic cultural differences" attain an "aesthetic permanence in the national way of life" and play a "psychological role in providing an important sense of self-worth for individuals from those communities" (Hesse 7-8), it nonetheless runs the danger of producing "showcases of culture" and leaving racism to be "perceived as merely resulting from ignorance, personal prejudice or mutual difficulties of cultural adjustment between majority and minority cultures" instead of a historical and political problem (Hesse 8). In short, the concept of race-

relations in Britain “incorporates yet disavows its indebtedness to a racist discourse, structured discursively around a racially unmarked (i.e. white) *British* perception of the problem of national identity induced by post-1945 *non-white immigration* from the New Commonwealth” (Hesse 11, original emphasis). Britishness as a national identity is perceived as under threat from non-white communities precisely because this idea of the nation is identified with one specific white ethnicity or race — specifically, Englishness — and that this Englishness is something the other “immigrant” or “diasporic” communities should aspire to. Stuart Hall further observes that throughout the twentieth-century, “Britishness” has apparently served as “the empty signifier, the norm, against which ‘difference’ (ethnicity) is measured,” but in fact, “as a category [it] has always been racialized through and through,” connoting “whiteness” (Hall, “The Multi-cultural Question” 221-222). With regard to race relations in Britain and British culture, Hall’s critical attitude towards nationalism is more favorable than in his other essay on Caribbean and cultural identity and diaspora. Whereas in that essay Hall argues for the transgressive and transnational impulse of diaspora as a cultural metaphor, in his discussion of multiculturalism in Britain he argues for “a new multi-cultural political logic” (“The Multi-cultural Question” 236) that can help in “the process of defining a more inclusive ‘Britishness’ with which, *only then*, might everyone be legitimately invited to identify. This constitutes *the democratic or cosmopolitan limit on both liberal and communitarian alternatives*” (“The Multi-cultural Question” 237, original emphasis). By averring that “Britishness as a national identity is in a transitional state, beset by problems and up for extensive renovation and renegotiation” (Hall, “The Multi-cultural Question” 237), Hall echoes Ernst Gellner’s understanding of nationalism as the attempt to find an amenable congruence between culture and politics within a

heterogeneous community rather than as an absolute or normative ethnic identity.

In light of this, I contend that Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* challenges the global cultural turn resulting from the heritage industry and its global consumption of national icons and identities. At the same time, the novel also reveals the terms upon which the normative, white English ethnicity (symbolized by Stevens and his meditations on dignity and greatness) are constructed and performed, thereby interrogating the apparently naturalness of this ethnicity as the basis of British national identity. The claim that Englishness and whiteness is the normative essence of British society is itself premised (as both Hesse and Hall have shown) on immigration from British colonies that is part of globalization's cultural and demographic flows. As a dialectic that discloses rather than forecloses the possibility of a mutually enabling relationship between the two terms, Ishiguro's novel negates the idea that nationalism necessarily homogenizes culture while globalization pluralizes and liberalizes culture. As two scholars have pointed out, the richness of Ishiguro's style and his vivid evocations of cultural and social landscapes (whether Japanese or English) often obscure a troubling negation of the cultures and societies thus represented. Wai-chew Sim argues that Ishiguro's novels confound readerly expectations that formal genres should correspond to certain cultural and national communities, thereby challenging his "commodification as a supplier of English and Japanese *authenticity*" and the idea that literary texts and their narrators should be native informants of a culture and nation (103, original emphasis). Rebecca Walkowitz glosses this refusal to fulfill conventional expectations as "the treason of representation" that Ishiguro commits by showing "how cultural stereotypes work by constructing his novels as national allegories, allowing the characteristics of his texts to stand for the characteristics of the cultures they seem to

describe,” but then disrupting these allegories by foregrounding how his novels are “fictionalization[s] of cultural truths” (“Floating Worlds” 1052). Walkowitz considers Ishiguro’s style cosmopolitan, but unlike Bruce Robbins’ formulation, it is a “critical cosmopolitanism” with “double consciousness, comparison, negation, and persistent-self-reflection” and “an aversion to heroic tones of appropriation and progress, and a suspicion of epistemological privilege” (*Cosmopolitan Style*, 2, original emphasis). On one hand, such emphases on the negation of generic expectations and cultural and national identification might be construed as part of a postmodern suspicion towards grand narratives, positivist knowledge, and centralized points of view. But on the other hand, read in terms of a negative dialectic, the critical cosmopolitanism that Walkowitz detects in Ishiguro may be understood as the failure or interruption of identification between nationalism and culture. To paraphrase Adorno, neither the concept of nationalism nor that of culture in the subjective position exhausts the other term in the objective position; complete sublation of the object by the subject does not occur. Instead, through the force of the encounter, the constitutive parts that make up the apparent wholes of both terms are placed in relation with one another across the subject-object divide, negating the initial semblance of wholeness in both subject and object. In Ishiguro’s work, the relationship between national consciousness and culture is not a sublation of one term within the other, but a constellation that challenges identification and a one-to-one correspondence between the terms that make it up. This constellation does not reify nationalism or culture into a readily available, substantive category or identity such as national culture, diasporic experience, or cosmopolitan feeling.

My use of Adorno to read *The Remains of the Day* draws on and extends Rebecca Walkowitz’s account of cosmopolitan style and Jed Esty’s discussion of the

anthropological turn in high modernist and postimperial British fiction. Walkowitz argues that contemporary British fiction is marked by stylized, critical cosmopolitan consciousness that differs from the transcendental humanistic approach of older cosmopolitanism. Walkowitz acknowledges that (but does not choose to focus on how) national associations and local cultural connections are still important for writers like Ishiguro and Salman Rushdie (*Cosmopolitan Style*, 8). My study complements Walkowitz's emphasis on cosmopolitan style by looking at the novel's staging of national and cultural tropes of Englishness and Americanness as a form of "late style" that pushes these markers of identity to their limit. Jed Esty's discussion of "culturalism" and "the anthropological turn" in high modernist and postimperial British fiction "names the discursive process by which English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture," and this process took shape as "an ethnographic and anti-elitist approach to symbolic practices" and "the rise of an Anglocentric culture paradigm" (2). *The Remains of the Day*, works through the highly ethnographic elements of English nationalism, culture, and class hierarchy provided by Stevens the butler in his self-fashioning narration. The novel relentlessly piles these conventional elements one on top of another, evincing the logic of Adorno's late style through the "sudden flaring up" of clichés of nation, culture, and ethnicity. The ethnographic framework of Stevens's narration of Englishness splits at the seams, allowing us to glimpse the objectification of its component parts and the residual, subjective presence of national consciousness and culture beneath globalization's objectification.

“Posed-Ethnicity”: The Remains of National Consciousness and Culture

Set in 1956, *The Remains of the Day* is a first-person narrative recounted by Stevens, an aging butler who formerly served an important English diplomat and politician, Lord Darlington, in the years leading up to World War II. Lord Darlington tries to avert the impending war in Europe through gentlemanly diplomacy, but ends up becoming an unwitting Nazi sympathizer, is publicly disgraced and dies soon after the war. Stevens now finds himself serving an American employer, John Farraday, who recently bought Darlington Hall and invites his friends from the United States to enjoy its authentic Englishness. On Mr Farraday’s advice, Stevens takes a trip into the country to visit a former housekeeper, Miss Kenton; we learn through a series of flashbacks accompanying Stevens’s narration of his trip that Stevens and Miss Kenton once shared some affection behind their business-like relationship, but Stevens’s devotion to his job and to Lord Darlington prevented any further romantic involvement. Miss Kenton is now married, albeit unhappily, and at the end of the novel Stevens wonders whether his professionalism was misguided and marvels at the jovial banter of the strangers around him.

By presenting the reader with many national and cultural clichés, *The Remains of the Day* works through rather than against these clichés to distinguish national consciousness from a reified version of national culture. National consciousness is not the same as the conventional understanding of national culture in terms of individual or collective lineage, history, and heritage. In Ishiguro’s novel, national consciousness challenges the reification of Englishness into readily consumable commodities and stereotypes like the grand country manor, the dignified lord and his dedicated butler, the provincial villager, and (by way of contrast) the crass and materialistic American.

Ishiguro evokes national attributes and impressions of national culture without urging the reader to identify with, denigrate, or celebrate a particular nation or culture. *The Remains of the Day* is not a transnational novel that offers nationalism and national culture as stereotypes to be dismissed and transcended on the way to a cosmopolitan state of affairs. The novel sets up its major national and cultural antagonism in no uncertain terms: Stevens and Lord Darlington are projections of a declining, aristocratic Englishness that represents Britain as a whole, while the *nouveau riche* Mr Farraday and the crafty American senator Mr Lewis personify a globally ascendant United States. But while the novel does play up such clichés, it also represents professionalism as a cultural form that is not distinctly English or American, even though both English and American characters espouse it. Within the novel, professionalism is culture in the sense of cultivated poise and expert knowledge, while banter as everyday practice is culture in its popular register. Stevens the butler, who narrates the novel and is its representative figure of Englishness, attempts to incorporate the quotidian form of bantering into his highly restrained professionalism to better serve his new American employer. *The Remains of the Day* therefore tracks the shift from one insular version of nationalism conflated with culture to another relational form of national consciousness whereby the connection between two national forms (English and American) is set up through the cultural forms of professionalism and bantering. In the first case, Stevens's consummate professionalism in Lord Darlington's service is a performance of Englishness; it evokes the literary and cultural tropes of the English country house with its dutiful butlers and gentlemanly lords. In the second case, professionalism becomes the method through which the novel works out its negative dialectic of national consciousness and culture to allow us a glimpse of the globalizing discourse that lies behind the first

instance of nationalism.

The Remains of the Day plays out the first type of nationalism (as conflated, national culture) through the antagonism between Englishness and Americanness seen in the exchanges between Stevens the butler, his former employer Lord Darlington, and the new owner of Darlington Hall, Mr Farraday. The opposition is almost too simple: Englishness and its representative figures appear to be grounded in an essential heritage and dignity that smugly confounds the craftiness and crass mercantilism of the Americans. Early in the novel, Mr Farraday suggests that Stevens should take a vacation and “see around this beautiful country of [his]” (*Remains* 4). Both Stevens’s unspoken and spoken responses suggest a depth of Englishness that his new American employer can never fathom, but in ways that highlight the clichés of the English country-house and nobleman-servant relationship. Stevens reflects that “those of our profession, although we did not see a great deal of the country in the sense of touring the countryside and visiting the picturesque sites, did actually ‘see’ more of England than most, placed as we were in houses where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered,” and that “it has been [Stevens’s] privilege to see the best of England over the years [...] within these very walls” of Darlington Hall (*Remains* 4). Stevens emphasizes his own Englishness by appealing to the idea of the English aristocracy as embodiments of the nation’s nobility and greatness. Seeing one’s country does not involve touring the countryside, but being in the immediate presence of “the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land” who themselves experience the state of the nation firsthand. For example, Lord Darlington witnessed “with [his] own eyes” how “ordinary, decent working people are suffering terribly” when he “went north” to look at the state of Britain in 1930s, but his admiration for the German and Italian fascist regimes’ “strong leadership”

in “set[ting] their houses in order” (*Remains* 198) tragically leads him to support Nazi Germany during the buildup to World War II. Yet Darlington represents a typically English sense of fair play and dignity, lamenting that English complicity with the harsh French and American treatment of a defeated Germany after World War I is “deeply disturbing” and “a complete break with the traditions of this country” (*Remains* 71).

Second, Stevens reckons national greatness in very formal terms: it lies embodied within physical structures like “these very walls” of Darlington Hall as well as the social hierarchy with its “ladies and gentlemen of the land” and those who serve them, like Stevens himself. Moreover, this formal greatness must be earned through hard work, for Stevens stresses that it is “those of [his] profession” who serve and wait upon England’s ladies and gentlemen that earn the “privilege” to share in that greatness. Lord Darlington, whose title comes through aristocratic birthright, makes a committed effort at gentleman diplomacy and “close personal contact” (*Remains* 91) with the other foreign dignitaries gathered at the 1923 conference he organizes to defuse the growing international tensions in Europe. For Stevens, Darlington earns and performs his greatness as a English lord by opposing the “cheating and manipulating” Americans in the sphere of international relations, challenging Senator Lewis’s idea of “professionalism” with his commitment to a sense of “honour” and “the desire to see justice prevail in the world” (*Remains* 103). Even if those efforts prove to be “misguided,” as Stevens remarks at the end of the novel, “at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he had made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man” (*Remains* 243). Such courage and commitment to either a principle or an employer that “embodies all that [one] finds noble and admirable” (*Remains* 200), even if the principle or employer eventually causes hurt and harm, seems

to bestow the privilege of dignity to its adherents, and this quality is glossed by Stevens as essentially English.

In contrast, Stevens implicitly finds his new employer Mr Farraday and the other Americans lacking the sterling qualities found in Lord Darlington and himself. The Americans' shallowness is emphasized by their amateurish desire for an authentic Englishness and their unwillingness to dedicate any labor and effort into achieving it. Mr Farraday is neither an aristocrat nor a peer; he belongs to a new class of rich Americans who enjoy travelling and owning properties in Europe. As Stevens reflects with more than a touch of regret, Mr Farraday's purchase of Darlington Hall has taken "this house out of the hands of the Darlington family after two centuries" (*Remains* 6) and broken the distinguished lineage that ties this noble family with its eponymous abode. The grand social functions that Lord Darlington enjoyed are also to disappear, for Mr Farraday "made it clear that he planned to hold only very rarely the sort of large social occasions Darlington Hall had seen frequently in the past" (*Remains* 7). With the passing of the hereditary residence of an English peer into a bourgeois American's hands, both the greatness of the house as well as Stevens's occasions for basking in that greatness are diminished. Moreover, Mr Farraday's calculating and miserly streak comes across when he asks Stevens to run the large estate with a staff of only four members (as opposed to seventeen in Lord Darlington's day), and, while admitting that "this might [...] mean putting sections of the house 'under wraps,'" instructs Stevens to "bring all [his] experience and expertise to bear to ensure such losses were kept to a minimum" (*Remains* 7). The degradation of Darlington Hall and the loss of its symbolic Englishness are palpable in Stevens's restrained reflections on Mr Farraday's instructions. Although the butler does not directly accuse or blame Mr Farraday,

“something of [his] scepticism” towards his new American employer’s fitness to own and occupy a great English house is indeed “betrayed” (*Remains* 7) by his constant comparison of how things were under Lord Darlington and how things will be under Mr Farraday. Without the social occasions to buttle before “the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land,” and bereft of his impressively large household staff to manage Darlington Hall, Stevens can neither enter the presence of those who embody great Englishness, nor can he perform his expert butlering that also marks his essential Englishness.

Within America’s global compass, Englishness as symbolized by Darlington Hall and Stevens himself becomes a commodity to be consumed and enjoyed, a leisurely pastime to be indulged in rather than a consciousness of national purpose and greatness. “At a time when his enthusiasm for his acquisition was at a height,” Mr Farraday shows some visiting American friends the Wakefields around Darlington Hall like a child showing off a new toy, and their “various American exclamations of delight” (*Remains* 122) as they tour the Hall are silently and disapprovingly noted by Stevens. Mr Farraday, with his “deep enthusiasm for English ways,” and the Wakefields, who themselves “were owners of an English house of some splendour” (*Remains* 122, 123), are depicted as connoisseurs of Englishness, hobbyists purchasing and collecting relics of English national culture for fun. As Mr Farraday says to Stevens with typical American frankness, “This is a genuine grand old English house, isn’t it? That’s what I paid for. And you’re a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You’re the real thing, aren’t you? That’s what I wanted, isn’t that what I have?” (*Remains* 124) Within the novel’s internal logic, a logic that is defined by Stevens’s inherent sense of Englishness, Mr Farraday and the Wakefields can never be truly

English, because their pursuit of “the real thing” is something they have “paid for” financially rather than a professional dedication to an ideal or committed effort to serve a dignified personage.

On one hand, Ishiguro, through the fate of the once-glorious Darlington Hall, expresses a sense of national decline in the face of American economic power and its commodity culture. On the other hand, Ishiguro also stresses how Stevens himself constructs nationalism as an exclusionary and homogeneous identity, or, as Paul Gilroy observes, as “ethnic absolutism” and “cultural insiderism” (*The Black Atlantic* 2,3). On his journey to see Miss Kenton, Stevens takes a break in Salisbury and marvels at the countryside.

We call this land of ours *Great Britain* [...] And yet what precisely is this “greatness”? [...] I would say that it is the very lack of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. [...] It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it. In comparison, the sorts of sights offered in such places as Africa and America, though undoubtedly very exciting, would [...] strike the objective viewer as inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness. (*Remains* 28-29, original emphasis)

For Stevens, national identity, or Great Britain’s “greatness,” is defined by a “lack of obvious drama or spectacle” that cannot be explained. It can only be intuited by someone truly in the know (such as Stevens himself) — just as “the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness, and feels no need to shout it.” Here, we see national greatness embodied in a landscape that itself embodies the conventional idea of British reserve or the dignified “stiff upper lip.” Furthermore, Ishiguro shows us the colonial discourse underlying Stevens’s appreciation of national greatness: Great Britain is defined by a *relative* lack; it is superior only in relation to “such places as Africa and America,” which are “inferior” due to their “unseemly demonstrativeness.”

This colonial vocabulary becomes more pronounced when Stevens discusses butlering as an essentially English profession.

[Great butlers] wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze [...] It is, as I say, a matter of “dignity”. It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. [...] Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of. [...] they are like a man who will, at the slightest provocation, tear off his suit and his shirt and run about screaming. In a word, “dignity” is beyond such persons. [...] it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman. (*Remains* 43)

Here, Stevens defines butlers as paragons of national identity, of an Englishness formed through the vocabulary of class, colonialism, and race. The class hierarchy can be seen from the way Stevens compares his professionalism to a gentleman’s suit that no ruffians will tear off him in public. In other words, the butler becomes a class all to himself, slightly below the “decent gentleman” whom he serves, but far and above the crowd of “ruffians” and “manservants.” Stevens further explains his idea of dignity in colonialist and racist terms: the “Continentals” are likened to savages “a breed incapable of emotional restraint,” who will rip off their clothes and “run about screaming.” Dignity is “beyond such persons,” simply because they are not part of the “English race.” Stevens’s circular logic at the end of this passage — “it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman” — echoes his earlier idea of Britain’s greatness embodied in a landscape that already “knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness.”

My point here is that Ishiguro critiques an exclusionary and homogeneous national identity by evoking symbols and icons we would readily associate with Englishness — the butler, the decent gentleman, the pastoral countryside, unflappable

dignity. Ishiguro pushes the internal logic of these symbols to the extreme in order to show the underlying discourses of class, colonialism, and race. Even though Stevens's narration is sincere, Ishiguro's narrative is ironic: as readers, we do not necessarily agree with Stevens's equation of greatness and dignity with a self-evident and holistic national identity of "Great Britain." In other words, Ishiguro critiques, in Edward Said's terms, the idea of nationalism as nativism, as an essential cultural or racial identity existing outside of time and space. This critique occurs within a transnational context, because Ishiguro connects Stevens's insular national identity with the larger framework of American global ascendancy and the post-imperial world situation.

But to read the novel as a diatribe against American cultural commodification and international hegemony, however, is to miss the novel's emphasis on the commodification and performance of Englishness by the English characters as well. As discussed above, the novel, through Stevens and Lord Darlington, emphasizes the stereotypes of English aristocracy, class distinctions, and dignified English reserve. Stevens's apparently intrinsic Englishness is just as carefully constructed, performed, and purchased in ways that parallel Mr Farraday's desire to acquire authentic Englishness. When he is off duty, Stevens reads "sentimental romance[s]" taken from Darlington Hall's library to maintain his "good accent and command of [the English] language" so as to help his "normal intercourse with ladies and gentlemen" (*Remains* 167). Of course, it is only grudgingly that Stevens admits to deriving "incidental enjoyment" from these books, "enjoy[ing] in a light-hearted sort of way [these] stories of ladies and gentlemen who fall in love and express their feelings for each other, often in the most elegant phrases" (*Remains* 168). In contrast to Stevens's earlier definitions of Englishness as heritage and dedicated service, Stevens's Englishness is now constructed

in thoroughly literary terms through English sentimental fiction. Stevens uses such clichéd fiction to maintain and improve his Englishness in three ways: as a means of maintaining his command of the English language, as a way of ensuring he can converse fluently with the distinguished guests at Darlington Hall, and finally as a way of imaginatively participating in that social world of English ladies and gentlemen he serves in but is not a part of.

The significance of this revelation (Stevens learning English and vicariously enjoying Englishness by reading romance novels) is that Englishness becomes a cultural commodity instead of a national identification with greatness that Stevens earlier emphasizes — only this time it is being commodified by the representative figure of Englishness (Stevens himself) instead of the Americans. Englishness, originally glossed as an identification with the nation's grandeur embodied both in England's landscape, its lords and ladies, and expressed through dedicated and impeccable service, is now culture in the popular, everyday sense that Stevens consumes, constructs, and performs in order to pass off as having culture in the elite, learned sense. This can be seen most clearly in the encounters Stevens has with the people in the English countryside while driving to meet Miss Kenton. As Stevens prepares for his trip, driving Mr Farraday's luxurious Ford automobile, he purchases "a new costume," a set of "clothes in which [he] might be seen driving the car" (*Remains* 11). This is important for Stevens because "one never knows when one might be obliged to give out that one is from Darlington Hall, and it is important that one be attired at such times in a manner worthy of one's position" (*Remains* 11). The ambiguity of the indefinite pronoun "one" is significant: its distancing and impersonal effect suggests that even though he may not be making a conscious effort to do, Stevens is allowing himself to be mistaken for a gentleman. The

appurtenances of English aristocracy — the clothes, the car, and the diction gleaned from sentimental romances — begin to assume a life of their own that takes over Stevens's subjectivity. As it turns out, Stevens is almost mistaken for a "posh geezer" by the chauffeur of another country house because he is "driving an old beauty" like Mr Farraday's car, and (more important) because Stevens "talk[s] almost like a gentleman" — an attribute that Stevens acquires and practices through his reading habits (*Remains* 119). In the village of Moscombe where Stevens spends the night after his car runs out of fuel, the people completely mistake him for a gentleman. The dramatic irony of the situation is apparent when one of the villagers, Mr Taylor, affirms that "you can tell a true gentleman from a false one that's just dressed in finery," and that he knows Stevens is the real thing "not just the cut of [his] clothes" or "the fine way [he's] got of speaking" but because of "something else" that is "hard to put your finger on" (*Remains* 184-5). Instead of correcting their misconception, Stevens continues to perform the role of genteel noble to the hilt, averring that the quality Mr Taylor detects in him is an essential, irreducible "dignity" (*Remains* 185). Stevens continues this charade, dropping strong hints that he had an important if covert role to play in British international affairs during World War II, and lying by omission about meeting famous personages like Churchill, Eden, and Halifax (*Remains* 187-8). In fact, in the presence of Lord Darlington and his peers, Stevens repeatedly confirms that he has no knowledge of international affairs and mechanically apologizes for being "unable to be of assistance on this matter" (*Remains* 195). What is significant here is that Englishness is no longer national identity but culture in a deeply duplicitous sense. No longer a form of dignity and greatness, Englishness becomes an appearance of elite bearing and expert knowledge constructed and used by Stevens to mislead the people of Moscombe who are delighted to have a

gentleman drop in on their everyday lives.

By showing us the commodification of Englishness, *The Remains of the Day* works in the mode of “posed-ethnicity” that characterizes black British writing (Stein 115). Mark Stein uses the term (a pun on David Hollinger’s phrase “post-ethnic”) to describe the work of black British authors like Hanif Kureishi whose work is “*self-consciously* post-colonial,” such that “the expectations of the field are neither rejected wholesale nor noiselessly imbibed. Instead, these expectations are embraced, parodied, and tampered with” (Stein 115, original emphasis). Ishiguro’s novel may be considered along these lines, because it poses Stevens the butler as a figure of Englishness who parodies and tampers with the conventions of patriotic, official nationalism as well as the postcolonial expectations of diasporic and cosmopolitanism sensibility. Stevens’s inherent Englishness and dignity is shown to be crafted and affected style, just as Ishiguro’s hybrid Japaneseness-Britishness turns out to be a quality attributes to Ishiguro by readers anxious to place him within the narrative of British race relations. *The Remains of the Day*, as a novel written in the late twentieth century when globalization is the dominant discourse, shows us how national markers of Englishness have been reified into cultural commodities, but it does not argue that the solution lies in de-commodifying or re-nationalizing (for example) the image of the country house or the figure of the aristocratic noble or impeccable butler. These tropes are necessary because the process of their commodification, as seen through a literary narrative, offers an implicit critique of globalization. The novel, as a negative dialectic of late style, stages an encounter between nationalism and culture and shows how certain aspects of English national identity have been reified into consumer culture and mark the absence of subjectivity instead of reinforcing it. This reminds us of Raymond Williams’s

understanding that one aspect of the residual becomes incorporated into manifestations of the dominant order. But at the same time, the novel also suggests an alternative or oppositional aspect of the residual, a form of national consciousness that is productively related to culture, and it does so through its treatment of professionalism.

Professionalism may be understood within the novel as part of high, elite culture: it suggests a cultivated poise and expert knowledge of one's field or vocation. It is marked as both English and American, but what is at stake in the novel is not whether it is actually an English or American cultural trait. In this sense it differs from the earlier cultural and national stereotypes like the noble English gentleman and the materialistic American boss because professionalism is not represented as commodified or consumable national culture. What is significant here is Ishiguro's use of the concept of professionalism as a cultural form to critique the compulsive identification of nationalism with homogeneous culture. On the one hand, professionalism is first defined in the novel as an American trait by Mr Lewis, the US senator at the 1923 international conference at Darlington Hall. Mr Lewis chides Lord Darlington and his European friends for being amateurs at international relations, "decent, well-meaning gentlemen" with "noble instincts" who "believe it's their business to meddle in matters they don't understand" (*Remains* 102). By implication, a professional is someone who possesses expertise on a certain matter and sees it as his or her business to take on such matters that they do understand, and to leave well alone matters that they do not. Mr Lewis's professionalism is denounced by Lord Darlington as an American brand of dishonest selfishness and manipulation (*Remains* 103). On the other hand, Stevens defines professionalism in characteristically English fashion, as he considers that "a butler's duty is [...] not to meddle in the great affairs of the nation" since "such great

affairs will always be beyond the understanding of those such as you and I," and instead "those of us who wish to make our mark must realize that we best do so by concentrating on what *is* within our realm" (*Remains* 199, original emphasis). But not only does Stevens fit the definition of professionalism offered by the American Mr Lewis, his behavior also fulfils the manipulating aspect of professionalism that Lord Darlington finds reprehensible in his American counterpart. When questioned by Mrs Wakefield, Mr Farraday's friend, about his previous employment, Stevens denies having worked for Lord Darlington, and his feigning ends up making his new employer Mr Farraday "look like a chump" (*Remains* 125) because Stevens does not appear to be an authentic English butler. Explaining to Mr Farraday that "it is not customary in England for an employee to discuss his past employers," Stevens manipulates Mr Farraday's ignorance about England by adopting the position of a native informant enlightening Mr Farraday about "the ways of this country" (*Remains* 125). Steven's disingenuousness before Mr Farraday is similar to his duplicity towards the villagers in Moscombe; in both cases he exploits his interlocutors' lack of knowledge and lays claim to an essential cultural trait of Englishness.

Professionalism in *The Remains of the Day* is also a mode of critique that shows up the cracks in globalism's compulsive identification of nationalism as the antagonist of culture and the reification of national identities in cultural commodities. One character who does exhibit this critical side of professionalism is Mr Cardinal, Lord Darlington's godson and a journalist writing about international affairs, who is later killed in action in World War II as an indirect consequence of Lord Darlington's actions. Mr Cardinal employs his professional skills as a journalist to the fullest, doing "a lot of investigating" in order to "know the situation in Germany [...] as well as anyone" in England, and

realizes that Lord Darlington is being manipulated by the Nazis “like a pawn” (*Remains* 222). Although his appeals to Stevens to use his own critical judgment to assess the situation fall on deaf ears, Mr Cardinal represents, within the novel, a salutary professionalism. Mr Cardinal is an English gentleman who belongs to the same social class as Lord Darlington, for his father Sir David Cardinal was “his lordship’s closest friend and colleague” (*Remains* 212). But the novel highlights Mr Cardinal’s journalistic skills and critical thinking — his professional acumen — rather than his national and cultural heritage as an English peer. Therefore, the professionalism he represents may be thought of as the negative dialectical relationship between national consciousness and culture. Mr Cardinal is as English as English can be in terms of his national heritage as part of a noble family, but this nationality is not reified into a cultural commodity as we have seen in Stevens’s case. We might recall Theodor Adorno’s understanding of the negative dialectic: it is a situation in which “objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder” — the concept that occupies the subject position and would normally subordinate the object “does not exhaust the thing conceived” (Adorno, “Negative Dialectics” 57). Neither culture nor nationalism has a subjective priority that can subsume and exhaust the other term as a subordinate object. The encounter between culture and nationalism throws into sharp relief the constellation of elements that make up both terms and how certain elements have become reified into apparently self-sufficient and self-explanatory concepts of identity. *The Remains of the Day* is a study of the clichés and stereotypes that result from the reification of various national and cultural objects and figures within globalization. In Stevens’s case, a sense of professionalism has become conflated with an essential Englishness based on dignity and hierarchy, whereas Mr Cardinal’s professionalism is a critical negation that points

out the hypostatization of Darlington's and Stevens's authoritarian nationalism behind a cultural mask of English fair play.

The Unconsoled: From Romance of the Archive to Geopolitical Allegory

If *The Remains of the Day* reworks ethnographic narration in the anthropological turn of British fiction, *The Unconsoled* performs a similar revision of what Suzanne Keen calls contemporary British romances of the archive. This genre details "the emergence of the library and the archive as privileged cultural sites, and the elevation of research questers to popular protagonists" (215). The fact that A. S. Byatt's *Possession* won the Booker Prize in 1990, the year after Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, suggests that, within British national-cultural imagination, the romance of the archive has an importance on par with ethnographic fiction. Keen sees A. S. Byatt's prize-winning novel as an exemplary romance of the archive which is "not only redemptive, but escapist, defensive, nostalgic, and revisionist in both traditional historical and postmodern senses" (Keen 34). While such revisions of history may be informed by "postcolonial views about the past" (Keen 211) and "contain excoriating self-criticism," more often than not they "contribute to nostalgic fantasies about the uses of the past," as "the endogamous Englishness of the past discovered within romances of the archive can add to a celebratory narrative of homogeneity, continuity, native virtues, and cultural survival" (Keen 215). In other words, the romance of the archive extends the ethnographic turn in British fiction following globalism's reified opposition of nationalism versus culture. Within this framework, cultural survival becomes paramount because the British national imagination can no longer function as a consolidating force in a postimperial world. Culture in the form of a recoverable textual

archive recuperates Britishness as heritage, a hidden essence tucked away in dusty documents rather than a historically-inflected and shifting discursive formation. The rise of the heritage industry in Britain coincides with this cultural turn in fiction.

Nationalism becomes an essentially cultural possession through the literary conventions of the romance: heterosexual love, genealogical inheritance, foreign adversaries, heroic expertise, and affectionate consummation of the main heterosexual couple.

The Unconsoled takes important characteristic ingredients of a romance of the archive but reworks them into a geopolitical allegory. Mr Ryder, a world-renowned music expert and “the finest pianist in the world” (507), arrives in a city to resolve a national and cultural crisis. The citizens want to choose a new direction for their community by discarding the incumbent formalist musician, Mr Christoff, and replacing him with a temperamental conductor, Mr Brodsky. They have invited Ryder to give a piano recital and a speech to champion Mr Brodsky. Ryder also meets various people who ask him for many favors and requests: his estranged wife and son, his aging father-in-law, old schoolmates from England, the hotel manager and his wife and son, and so on. In the end, Ryder’s attempts at reconciliation with his wife and child fail; he prepares to leave for Helsinki having neither performed his piece nor given his speech, and he has failed to fulfill any request except for one. The crisis that the unnamed, unspecified European city is suffering from bears the hallmarks of the current globalizing moment in which, as Fredric Jameson suggests, we are witnessing “the disappearance of specifically national cultures and their replacement, either by a centralized commercial production for world export or by their own mass-produced neo-traditional images,” (*Geopolitical Aesthetic* 3). In this state of affairs, the geopolitical allegory is not only a necessary critical tool but an imaginative structure already present in artworks. Because artworks are

implicated in but not reducible to this neo-traditional and export-based heritage industry, there remains within Ishiguro's international novels a critical impulse, such that "all thinking today is *also*, whatever else it is, an attempt to think the world system as such" (Jameson, *Geopolitical Aesthetic* 4, original emphasis). Thinking the world system involves more than faithfully depicting, say, the daily lives of migrant workers and the machinations of multinational companies in a literary text. Rather,

on the global scale, allegory allows the most random, minute, or isolated landscapes to function as a figurative machinery in which questions about the system and its control over the local ceaselessly rise and fall [...]. On the actantial level, a host of partial subjects, fragmentary or schizoid constellations, can often now stand in allegorically for trends and forces in the world system. (*Geopolitical Aesthetic* 5)

What this means is that in a literary text engaged in a geopolitical allegory the landscape of nations and cultures, together with migrant subjects and cosmopolitan characters, evoke rather than equate with the globalizing framework within which they are produced. Through this evocation, geopolitical allegory, like Adorno's negative dialectic and late style, demystifies and empties out conventions and clichés of nationalism and culture to reveal the larger system that produces national and cultural subjectivities as stable objects.

Overlooking the geopolitically allegorical structure of *The Unconsoled* would produce a "psychological interpretation" which seeks the power of subjectivity in "the expression of subjectivity" rather than in the literary reworking of subjective figures ("Late Style" 297). The discourse of globalization and cosmopolitanism has produced psychological interpretations of Ishiguro's novel that focus on the direct correspondence between literary characters and human psyches. One critic psychoanalyzes Ryder, the novel's narrator, as an exemplary Freudian "dream-narrator" of modern subjectivity

who tells “the story of a son driven by a hunger for love from hateful parents” (Adelman 169). But the conclusion drawn from this Oedipal family drama that “Ryder is a potential pedophile” suggests the cognitive limits of such a psychoanalytical approach (Adelman 178). Moving from the individual to the international, Bruce Robbins makes a case for cosmopolitanism in *The Unconsoled*. For Robbins, the book suggests “that in order to cohabit with less indecency in a world of immigrants, refugees, and strangers [...] we need a broader and more inclusive civility” (439-440). Just as Adelman finds in Ryder a figure for the modern, self-reflexive ego, Robbins finds in Ryder a figure for cosmopolitanism’s “trained, fragile politeness” that “we all feel” when “we are stretched and stressed by the larger and larger circles of our interdependence” (435). What I want to point out here is that both Adelman and Robbins directly translate the experience of Ryder, a fictional and unreliable narrator, into a real-world equivalent of the human ego or the cosmopolite. While both Adelman and Robbins agree that *The Unconsoled* works metaphorically, they seem unable to read Ryder himself as a metaphor, as a figure of fictional speech. Ryder has become that figure who embodies idealized subject positions in globalized culture, and therefore appears beyond metaphor.

My point in discussing these psychoanalytical and cosmopolitan readings of *The Unconsoled* is to stress how the novel openly invites — even begs — such interpretations, with its Oedipal family dramas and associative dreamlike narrations and tourist hotels and harried travelers. But this interpretive openness is undermined by the novel’s circumscription and satirizing of the academic experts, public intellectuals, and cultural pundits who would objectify music as culture into a basis for their civic and national community. *The Unconsoled*’s geopolitical allegory treats art itself — specifically, music — as the objective site where nationalism, culture, and globalization intersect. The sense

of national and cultural crisis is further compounded by the impressions of a European yet cosmopolitan city in a state of marvellous decay. This is similar to Stevens's "condition-of-England" narrative in *The Remains of the Day*, in which national and cultural attributes are evoked without any exhortation towards identification with a particular nation or community. But in *The Unconsoled*, the crisis of national culture is mirrored in the phantasmagoric tone and style of the novel itself rather than expressed through the voice of a focalized narrator. This suggests that *The Unconsoled* challenges what Benedict Anderson calls bounded seriality — an identity or subject position that has its boundaries officially defined by race or ethnicity, and this series grows out of state technologies like the population census ("Nationalism, Identity, and the World-in-Motion: On the Logics of Seriality" 117). On the one hand, there are many references to national locales and bounded identities in *The Unconsoled*: Ryder may have grown up Worcestershire, England; he flies in from either Rome or Vienna and departs for Helsinki; the citizens compare their home to Antwerp and Stuttgart; the hotel lobby, where American and Japanese tourists meet and greet, stocks magazines in English, French, and German; there is a Hungarian Cafe in the neighborhood where the hotel porters gather to dance to gypsy music; the characters' names have a distinctively European ring to them: Christoff, Brodsky, Hoffman, Pedersen, among others. On the other hand, the citizens' desire to identify with an artistic doyen whose style can bind them as a collective subject comes across as misguided and unsatisfiable. The fiasco with Christoff and Brodsky suggests a turn away from a bounded, serial national reproduction through objectified culture. A close look at the artistic approaches advocated by Christoff, Brodsky, and Ryder will reveal the contours of the novel's geopolitical allegory.

Mr Christoff is the incumbent artistic leader whose approach is rigorously formalist. Upon meeting Ryder, an elder member of the City Council, Mr Pedersen, elaborates his city's conflation of art, culture, and national politics when he acknowledges with "profound shame" that the people of the city "must look to an outsider, to someone like [Ryder]" in order to "rectify" the mistake of following Mr Christoff's artistic and cultural leadership "for so long" (*Unconsoled* 100). Speaking in his own defense, Christoff argues that what "he has come to represent" is a much-needed hermeneutic for art, and, by extension, culture and nationalism:

They say my approach celebrates the mechanical, that I stifle natural emotion. [...] I merely introduced an approach, a system that would allow people like this some way into the likes of Kazan and Mullery. Some way of discovering meaning and value in the works. I tell you, sir, when I first came here, they were crying out for precisely this. For some ordering, for a system they could comprehend. The people here, they were out of their depth, things were breaking down. People were afraid, they felt things slipping out of control. (*Unconsoled* 190)

What Christoff represents is a systematic and schematic form of analysis and performance, "a system" that clarifies the nuances of art so that most people "could comprehend" it, rather than an intuitive mode that depends on or appeals to "natural emotion." However, the "widespread misery" in the city comes from his artistic style, described as "functional," "cold," with a "dryness" (*Unconsoled* 101,102) that "celebrates the mechanical" and "stifle[s] natural emotion" (*Unconsoled* 190). Mr Pedersen, speaking on behalf of his community, longs for a time before Christoff came, when the city "was a very happy community" and "there were large happy families" with "real lasting friendships" (*Unconsoled* 97). Ryder himself denounces Christoff at a public gathering originally meant to garner support for the embattled luminary. In response to a question about the "circular dynamic in Kazan," Ryder condemns the schematic approach that

Christoff represents: “My own view is that Kazan never benefits from formalised restraints. [...] There are simply too many layers, too many emotions, especially in the later works” (*Unconsoled* 201). With this denunciation, “an angry circle” (*Unconsoled* 203) of audience members surrounds and physically assaults Christoff. It is hard to miss Ishiguro’s irony here: Christoff, the proponent of the circular dynamic, is himself assaulted by his own aesthetic approach in the form of an angry circle of former supporters.

A similar fate befalls Mr Brodsky, whose musical approach is the antithesis of Christoff’s. Brodsky’s natural emotion is matched by his legendary moodiness: he becomes a loud, abusive drunk because of a failed romance; he has an amputated leg that will not heal properly, and both his romance and his music are just “a wonderful consolation” for his festering and fascinating wound (*Unconsoled* 313). But when the city’s leaders listen to a recording of Brodsky’s music, they are lulled into tranquility and moved to tears by what they praise as “true music,” something that “shared [their] values” and they had “so sorely missed over the years” under Christoff (*Unconsoled* 113). However, during his performance at the end of the novel, Brodsky reveals that his passionate approach produces results equally unwelcome by the city’s inhabitants. Ryder observes that

[Brodsky] was almost perversely ignoring the outer structure of the music [...] to focus instead on the peculiar life-forms hiding just under the shell. There was a slightly sordid quality about it all, something close to exhibitionism, that suggested Brodsky was himself profoundly embarrassed by the nature of what he was uncovering, but could not resist the compulsion to go yet further. The effect was unnerving, but compelling. (*Unconsoled* 492)

If Christoff’s “mechanical” approach seems to be too “functional” or “cold” by its focus on the formal details of the artwork, then Brodsky’s approach represents the other

extreme that focuses subjectively on the artist himself more than the artwork. Brodsky's conducting excavates "the peculiar life-forms hiding just under the shell," but, because it is "something close to exhibitionism," whatever "life-forms" are hiding there do not come from the music itself but rather Brodsky's own tortured and ecstatic mental state while he conducts, a state in which he loses volition and cannot "resist the compulsion to go yet further," exposing himself to the audience. Indeed, Brodsky's conducting goes from "compelling" to "unnerving: "that tentativeness of technique that so often signals a disaffinity between a conductor and his musicians had entered the orchestra's sound. The musicians [...] were wearing expressions of incredulity, distress, even disgust" as Brodsky's "conducting now took on a manic quality and the music veered dangerously towards the realms of perversity" (*Unconsoled* 494). The audience members also begin reacting in a way that suggests a "disaffinity" between Brodsky and the civic and cultural values that they originally thought he shared: they "were now exchanging worried looks, coughing uneasily, shaking their heads" while "one woman stood up to leave" (*Unconsoled* 494). Brodsky finally collapses before he can finish his performance, and his lover, Miss Collins, rebukes him on stage in a way that parallels Ryder's earlier denunciation of Christoff. Miss Collins prophesies that Brodsky is destined for someplace "dark and lonely" because his music is "only ever about that silly wound" — his amputated leg — and for that reason Brodsky will "never be able to serve the people of this city," because "[he] care[s] nothing for their lives" (*Unconsoled* 499). If Christoff is condemned by the City Council to "some dark corner" of history because his music is only ever about "formalised constraints," then Brodsky is condemned to "somewhere dark and lonely" because his music is only ever about the "natural emotion" of his own pain and suffering, which, when translated into artistic performance, is at first

“compelling” but turns out “unnerving” and perverse. Like Christoff, who is assaulted by an angry circle of former fans of his circular dynamic, Brodsky’s musical approach ironically turns against him. His methodology uses music to assuage and express his own aggrieved emotions, and as a result a serious disaffinity emerges between him, his orchestra, and his originally sympathetic audience through his resolutely subjective artistic expression. As a symbolic parallel, the ironing board that Brodsky uses as a crutch during his final performance also collapses under him, signalling the breakdown of both artist and artistic composition. If the city were to “build something all over again” based on Brodsky’s music, it would only magnify the wonderful consolation for Brodsky’s leg wound, “the one true love of [his] life,” and “destroy everything” in the end because it is so subjectively focused on the musician’s natural emotions (*Unconsoled* 498).

Within the formal logic of a romance of the archive, Christoff and Brodsky would be scholarly antagonists caught up in the central struggle of cultural survival through artistic recuperation. But *The Unconsoled*, as an anti-archival romance, stages the failure of projects that attempt to justify a national community based on art or archives as instrumental culture — in other words, Ishiguro’s novels negates the instrumental use of art and knowledge as culture to realize a national, collective subject. Mr Pedersen and the city council are a miniature national community that desires a cultural framework, and the corresponding national culture is narrow and exclusive: it must be either Christoff’s formalism or Brodsky’s romanticism, nothing in between. What *The Unconsoled* produces, on the other hand, is an allegory of national consciousness as a relational power that works through culture rather than objectifying it into an essential set of characteristics. This allegory centers on Ryder himself and the manner in which he

performs his music. *The Unconsoled* presents the failures of Christoff's and Brodsky's music as the basis for the city's insular national culture in a darkly comic and satirical manner to foreground Ryder's own artistic style. As a renowned musician and expert critic, Ryder embodies both Christoff's formal restraint and Brodsky's natural emotion, and his music functions as the negative dialectic between nationalism and culture that disrupts the objectifying power of globalization. But, unlike the other two musical doyens, Ryder cannot play before an audience — the only time he succeeds in playing the piano is when he thinks he is alone in a hut near a graveyard, but turns out to be providing musical accompaniment for Mr Brodsky's burial of his dog. I will now focus on this unique occurrence because, although its context may sound comic or even ludicrous, it serves as an excellent example with which to elucidate how the negative dialectic functions through the formal framing of the participants and their actions.

Ryder, anxious to rehearse before his scheduled concert later that evening, finds a small hut on a hill with a piano and begins playing. On hearing a noise outside, Ryder then remembers that he agreed to play the piano while Brodsky buried his pet, and obliges by continuing his piano accompaniment. The significance of this is that Ryder's incidental elegy for Brodsky's dog is the only request that Ryder agrees to and successfully completes in the book. There are three diegetic frames nested within the overall context of Ryder's piano-playing: Ryder remembering his childhood in England, Brodsky burying his dog, Brodsky remembering his failed romance with his ex-lover Miss Collins. While he plays, Ryder's reactions evince his combination of Christoff's "tight control of dynamics" (*Unconsoled* 136) and Brodsky's penchant for "natural emotion" (*Unconsoled* 190): "[he] was in absolute control of every dimension of the composition" and "enjoying the ease with which the tangled knots of emotion rose

languidly to the surface and separated" (*Unconsole* 357). This unique piano performance is also the moment where Ryder is most at home with himself, and — as Adorno asserts in his essay on late style — where we witness "the sudden flaring up" of subjectivity just before "it abandons the work of art" ("Late Style" 297). What is left behind in the novel are "the hollowed-out forms from which [subjectivity] escapes" ("Late Style" 297) — namely, the constellation made up of aesthetic approaches espoused by Christoff, Brodsky, and Ryder, together with the impressions of various national cultures scattered throughout the book. The "sublime melancholy of the third movement" of his piece evokes a national impression that forms the first nested frame in this scene, closely tied to Ryder's childhood memories of strict parental expectations:

before long [I] began to picture the faces of my parents, sitting side by side, listening with looks of solemn concentration. Oddly I did not picture them sitting in a concert hall — as I knew I would see them later in the evening — but in the living room of a neighbour in Worcestershire, a certain Mrs Clarkson, a widow with whom my mother had for a time been friendly. (*Unconsole* 357)

The novel drops numerous hints that Ryder is English and grew up in Worcestershire. We may recall that in *The Remains of the Day*, England's West Country regions of Devon and Cornwall and their inhabitants appear at first glance to be a backdrop that contributes to the authentic Englishness of the novel, but they turn out to be a foil that reveals Stevens's selective construction and performance of English conventions. In a similar way, the references to Worcestershire in *The Unconsole* situate Ryder's past in England's West Midlands, but they point towards connections with people and places of other nationalities and cultures rather than identification with a singular national culture. The motif through which these connections are formed is music itself — as his memory coalesces, Ryder recalls that his parents and Mrs Clarkson were "listening with

serious expressions while [he] played the piano in the corner" (*Unconsoled* 358). Ryder's music evokes a past grounded in one national milieu, but instead of nostalgically emphasizing or identifying with that nationalism, it moves towards a connection with "none other than Brodsky in the process of burying his dog" (*Unconsoled* 358) – the second nested frame of this episode. Brodsky's gravedigging quickly gives way to the third nested frame, in which Ryder empathetically recalls Brodsky's tragic romance with Miss Collins through free indirect style:

At first, naturally enough, Brodsky would have turned over memories of his late companion [his dog Bruno]. But as the minutes had ticked by and there continued to be no sign of me, his thoughts had turned to Miss Collins and their forthcoming rendez-vous at the cemetery. Before long, Brodsky had found himself remembering again a particular spring morning of many years ago, when he had carried two wicker chairs out into the field behind their cottage. That had been no more than a fortnight after their arrival in the city, and despite their depleted funds Miss Collins had been going about furnishing their new home with considerable energy. (*Unconsoled* 359)

Just as the reference to Worcestershire in the earlier passage was a marker of national geography, the cottage beside the field inhabited by a poor but genteel couple is a pastoral image that *The Unconsoled* evokes but undermines. This scene of pastoral tranquility quickly sours as Miss Collins inadvertently references Brodsky's "recent failures" (*Unconsoled* 359) and he in turn is offended by "her perfectionism" and "high-mindedness" (*Unconsoled* 360); as a result "for the rest of that day, for several of the days that followed, something cold had remained in their lives" (*Unconsoled* 361). Despite its use of their conventions, Ishiguro's novel withholds the certainty of detail and the resolution of difficulties promised in ethnographic fiction of the anthropological turn and the romance of the archive. Instead, the novel matches Brodsky's thoughts and actions with Ryder's music and moves outwards from the innermost frame of Brodsky's

memories back to the diegetic present of Ryder's piano-playing:

It was while he had been lost in such memories [of Miss Collins] that I had finally arrived at the hut and begun to play. For the first several bars, Brodsky had gone on staring emptily into the distance. Then, with a sigh, he had brought his mind back to the task in hand and picked up his spade. [...] He had actually started to shovel some earth back when something, perhaps the sadness of the music, had finally made him pause.

As I concluded the third movement, I could hear Brodsky still hard at work and decided to forget the final movement — it was hardly suitable for the proceedings — and simply recommence the third once more. This, I felt, was the least I could do for Brodsky after having kept him waiting. [...] (*Unconsoled* 361)

As Ryder plays the third movement of *Asbestos and Fibre* again, he finds himself “lending a greater emphasis to the elegaic nuances than [he] had previously” (*Unconsoled* 362).

When he steps out of the hut and meets Brodsky, the older musician thanks him profusely: “That was very beautiful. I’m grateful, very grateful” (*Unconsoled* 362).

In this episode, the geopolitical allegory of national consciousness and culture works through Ryder's art, through his musical combination of Christoff's circular dynamic and Brodsky's emotional expressiveness. By using the term allegory, I do not mean that Worcestershire in the novel refers directly to England or that Brodsky's cottage refers sociologically to a pastoral lifestyle. Instead, the novel presents us with these figures as literary impressions rather than realistic identifications; the unelaborated and impressionistic markers of nationalism and culture here remind us of Adorno's thoughts on Beethoven's “foreshortening” in his late works: “this style aims not so much to purify his musical idiom of clichés as to purify the clichés of the illusion of control by subjective spirit” (“Late Style” 298). Following Adorno's thinking, *The Unconsoled* invites us to focus on how these national and cultural figures are worked over and connected through the formal frames in this episode instead of asking how

these figures identify with a national or cultural collective subject. Ryder repeats the third movement of *Asbestos and Fibre*, the passage of music that moves us into and out of the narrative frames, thereby using Christoff's circular dynamic not as a formal constraint but as a means of coalescing his own memories and then leaving them behind as he enters Brodsky's point of view and emotional recollections. Ryder's music fulfils, but not through his own volition, the unspoken expectations raised in the first and fourth frames: Ryder's parents watching him with "solemn concentration" as he plays, and Miss Collins' "perfectionism" and "high-mindedness" towards Brodsky's failures. By playing the third movement over again, giving Brodsky "a little more time to stand over the grave with his thoughts" (*Unconsoled* 361-2), and playing "the very best music" he is capable of, Ryder symbolically fulfils these unspoken expectations by providing musical accompaniment for the burial of Brodsky's dog — the only request he fulfils in the entire novel. Brodsky fails to live up to Miss Collins' and the city council's expectations later in the novel during his own musical performance because (as I discussed earlier) his music is centered on his own wounded subjectivity. But Ryder's fulfilment comes precisely when his subjectivity is emptied out through music, when conventional markers of nationalism and culture "are no longer permeated and overwhelmed by subjectivity but simply allowed to stand" and "end up transforming themselves into expressions" ("Late Style" 297). Ryder's music is an expressive model of how a geopolitical allegory of national consciousness and culture would work by connecting one subjectivity (Ryder) to another (Brodsky) without objectifying or subordinating either one. Like Mr Cardinal's professionalism in *The Remains of the Day*, Ryder's music in *The Unconsoled* works through clichés of nationalism and culture in order to throw into sharp relief their objectification, reconfiguring them as constellations

rather than absolutes to help us glimpse the possible connections between both forces.

* * *

CHAPTER THREE

"THE TOIL THAT IS BALANCE": DEREK WALCOTT'S CRYSTALLIZATION AND INTERWEAVING OF NATIONALISM AND TRANSNATIONALISM

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that Derek Walcott, who is regarded as a transnational writer of diasporic culture, reconfigures the identity positions of race, ethnicity, and diasporic hybridity to emphasize how nationalism is a way of negotiating between politics and culture in a transnational situation. Derek Walcott's literary expression of residual nationalism evokes dominant figures of "diasporic hybridity" and the Caribbean as a deterritorialized space of migrant cultural identities, but shows us how diaspora and migrancy are created through an engagement with nationalism rather than by transcending nationalism's political and cultural critique.

At its most general, this chapter considers what it means that so many scholars treat Caribbean literature and culture as exemplifying the attributes of hybridity. From this perspective, the Caribbean cultural hybridity exemplifies globalization's dichotomy of nationalism and culture, in which culture as lived experience and intellectual production opposes nationalism and transcends national boundaries. Such treatment can be discovered in the work of Stuart Hall, foundational postcolonial literary criticism by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, as well as the writings of Louis James and Elaine Savory. My focus on English-language writing stems from a sense of the considerable influence that Stuart Hall and various late twentieth-century anglophone Caribbean writers have had on the conceptualizations of subjectivity, identity, and literature that have, in turn, made their mark on the Anglo-American

academy in general. These conceptualizations may have started out as local concerns, but they have taken on a global scale with the recent turn from postcolonial to globalizing paradigms of reading literature.

Perhaps the prime example of a Caribbean writer who has followed this trajectory is Derek Walcott, whose winning of the 1992 Nobel Prize for literature has, according to some critics, “demonstrated the ongoing vitality and growing global prominence of Anglophone Caribbean fiction” (Booker and Juraga 22). This global prominence can be explained through Raymond Williams’ conceptualization of the relations between dominant, residual, and emergent social formations I discussed in Chapter One. The emergent concept of globalization that takes the Caribbean as the prime example of the dominant discourse of hybrid cultural identity, positioning it against the residual sense of nationalism and national consciousness. When Hall and literary scholars of anglophone Caribbean literature privilege the transnational and the hybrid, they contend, either implicitly or explicitly, that Caribbean literature cannot be thought of in terms of nationalism or national consciousness. They habitually subsume the nation within a regional Caribbean consciousness that, by virtue of its heterogeneous mix of cultural and linguistic traditions, undermines the nation’s premises of purity and homogeneity. In short, because Caribbean subjectivity is considered to be historically, culturally, and linguistically heterogeneous, the literature produced by such subjects is held to be correspondingly multifarious in form and content. Thus Caribbean literature can be thought of as a representative example of the complex interweaving and cross-hatching of histories, cultures, and languages in a world where nation-states are increasingly obsolete. Challenging Hall’s metaphorization of hybridity and diaspora, critics such as Shalini Puri contend that literary representations of hybridity and culture

are complicit with official national ideologies of multiculturalism and thus oppressive. But what Hall and Puri have in common is the idea of the nation as a monolithic and authoritarian power structure that oppresses radical culture. They both subscribe to globalization's administration of culture against nationalism, without considering how Caribbean literature can be read as a form of residual nationalism where the dynamic connections between national consciousness and radical culture are made visible.

In order to focus on Walcott's literary reformulation of the relationship between nationalism and culture, I draw on Simon Gikandi's discussion of Caribbean literature as a revisionary modernism and Theodor Adorno's ideas of art's critical function within the culture industry. This framework reveals the residual nationalism within Walcott's apparently migrant and cosmopolitan texts, and allows us to glimpse the relations between nationalism and culture on an international scale, against the backdrop of globalization's administered culture. Walcott's poetry revises conventional figures of national identity and cultural hybridity, and in doing so, it reconfigures nationalism into what Timothy Brennan calls a "discursive formation" or a "gestative political structure" (46-47) rather than an achieved fiction and a foreclosed identity.

Caribbean Hybridity and Diaspora as a Global Discourse

As I discussed in my first chapter, Stuart Hall's metaphorization of Caribbean hybridity into a cultural identity that exemplifies our globalized world both assumes that the diasporic condition is an already accomplished fact, and elides the nationalist sentiments of the diasporas he uses as his examples. Despite his contention that diaspora, as a metaphor, helps us to think of "identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation"

("Cultural Identity", 222), Hall does not explain how the identity of his privileged subjects, "the Afro-Caribbean people [who are] already people of a diaspora," ("Cultural Identity" 235) is formed. Furthermore, Hall sidesteps the national consciousness of the Afro-Caribbean and Palestinian diasporic peoples by reframing identity in exclusively cultural terms, such that "the issue of cultural identity now constitutes one of the most serious *global* problems at the start of the twenty-first century" ("Negotiating" 25, my emphasis). By using diaspora as a metaphor for cultural identity, and framing cultural identity within a global framework, Hall tries to portray nationalism as a limited version of identity. But Hall himself creates another limited identity position when he suggests that Caribbean people's identities in the next century will be formed by "in using the enormously rich and complex cultural heritages [...] as the different musics out of which a Caribbean sound might one day be produced" ("Negotiating" 38). While the concept of "a Caribbean sound" seems more attractive and liberating than national identity, this concept functions in Hall's thinking as a surrogate for collective identity, nationalist or otherwise. If, as I discussed in Chapter One, we understand national consciousness and "complex cultural heritages" to be related instead of opposed to each other, then a Caribbean sound can be produced out of an intertwining of nationalism and culture rather than the exclusively cultural mixing on which Hall insists.

Hall's field defining idea of the Caribbean diaspora as a metaphor for global cultural identity has informed both postcolonial and Caribbean literary studies. Various critics have claimed that because "cultural clash and miscegenation formed the brutal texture of Caribbean life," "those theories developed in the polydialectical communities of the Caribbean have been amongst the most complex and have displayed the greatest

potential for abrogating Eurocentric concepts" (Ashcroft et al. 146, 117); others have argued for the global significance of Caribbean writing as "a major canon of world literature" that "has contributed enormously to the strength of Caribbean culture against oppression and foreign appropriation" (Savory 746). Hall's view, however, has not gone unchallenged. Shalini Puri is among those who argue that hybridity in the region does not always possess the postnational qualities Hall ascribes to it. Because "invocations of cultural hybridity have been crucial to Caribbean nationalisms," Puri claims, they "undo the generalized claim that hybridity and the nation-state are opposed to one another and enable a broader questioning of invocations of a 'global village' and the death of the nation-state" (6). Puri counters such thinking by attending to historically specific instances of hybridity in Caribbean literary texts and social practices, showing their importance in political, economic as well as cultural production. However, Puri enacts an unwarranted split between literary form and radical politics in her reading of Derek Walcott. In her view, lyrical and affective representations of people or groups that do not explicitly delineate social and political conflicts weakens these subjects' historical and political import and glosses over the community's social problems. In particular, Puri reads Derek Walcott's 1992 Nobel Lecture *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory* and focuses on a moment late in Walcott's lecture where the poet describes the fragments of a broken vase being lovingly reassembled. She considers this piecing together "an act of love" which is problematic because of "the way that the sentiment becomes a ruse for silence on inequitable relations of power" (69). Puri concludes that "Walcott's treatment of hybridity [in *The Antilles*] within Caribbean nation-states thus appears to be an aesthetically accomplished reinscription of official Caribbean national mottoes" and therefore his lecture "attempts to forge a unity without attending to the

unequal terms of inclusion in the national imaginary or the unequal access to the resources of the state; it posits in advance a unity and equality that has yet to be achieved" (69). Puri considers Walcott's earlier play, *Pantomime*, to be a more successful and pointed interrogation of hybridity discourse. As a play within a play, *Pantomime* literally and metaphorically stages the tensions between Harry (an Englishman) and Jackson (his Trinidadian employee) and becomes "a dramatization of a hybridity that deconstructs essential oppositions" while at the same time also dramatizing "an opposition understood as arising out of one's social location and relationship to material privilege" (135). For Puri, Walcott's art is complicit with national ideology unless it uses symbolic language to clearly mark the oppositions that arise out of social and material struggles. Moreover, like Stuart Hall, Puri equates nationalism with authoritarian state ideology that must be opposed by deconstructed and decentered culture.

Art as a Crystallization of Contending Narratives

However, as I discussed in Chapter One, both European and postcolonial theories of nationalism emphasize the contestatory and constantly negotiated nature of nationalism as "the striving to make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof" (Gellner 296). Therefore, in contrast to Shalini Puri, I argue that Walcott's prose and poetry think through the globalization's objectification and binary opposition of nationalism and culture. Walcott reconfigures the identity positions of race, ethnicity, and diasporic hybridity in order to reveal how nationalism is a way of negotiating between politics and culture. Walcott's writing evokes seemingly absolute identities and concepts and reconfigures them as multivalent constellations instead of singular entities, crystallizing their dynamic relations in order to reveal how nationalism

is a social formation created out of the intertwining of politics and culture within a global framework of economic and cultural flows. This geopolitical awareness is distinct from and irreducible to socio-economic globalization. In making this claim, I am reading Walcott's writing in terms of Theodor Adorno's idea of the artwork as a carefully crafted artifact that is always in a productive tension with its historical and political conditions of possibility. Consider this passage from *Minima Moralia*, in which Adorno likens literary texts to "spiders' webs" that are "tight, concentric, transparent, well-spun and firm":

They draw into themselves all the creatures of the air. Metaphors flitting hastily through them become their nourishing prey. Subject matter comes winging towards them. The soundness of a conception can be judged by whether it causes one quotation to summon another. Where thought has opened up one cell of reality, it should, without violence by the subject, penetrate the next. It proves its relation to the object as soon as other objects crystallize around it. In the light that it casts on its chosen substance, others begin to glow. (*Minima Moralia* 87)

What emerges here is an emphasis on the tautness and yet openness of the form and structure of the artwork, like a spider's web – in fact, the artwork's capacity to "draw into themselves all the creatures of air" depends upon their "tight, concentric" and "firm" construction. For Adorno, productive artwork does two things: first, it negates the apparent wholeness and identity of those historical and political forces within which it finds itself. This explains the violent, predatory image of the artwork trapping "metaphors" (literary devices that rely upon the *identification* of a vehicle with a tenor) as "nourishing prey" for its own meaning-making. This recalls moments of similar negation and violence in *Aesthetic Theory*, where Adorno treats a work of art as "a thing that negates the world of things" (119); artworks are "a priori negative" because "they kill what they objectify by tearing it away from the immediacy of its life. Their own life

preys on death" (133). But this symbolic violence does not nullify nor evade the represented objects (whether they are individuals, collectives, or political and historical events) because of the second important aspect of the artwork. Negation in Adornian terms does not mean cancelling out so much as tearing objects from their contextual "immediacy" through representation and foregrounding the text's own status as a form of mediation. This framing medium is what catalyzes and motivates critical thought: in Adorno's words from *Minima Moralia*, "where thought has opened up one cell of reality, it should, without violence by the subject, penetrate the next. It proves its relation to the object as soon as other objects crystallize around it." Here, it is not the artwork or the literary text itself that executes the penetration or the crystallization; rather, it is "thought" that is activated once the immediacy of object is torn away and put to death (i.e. once it becomes represented by the artwork), and thought that forms the nexus around which other objects (things that are represented in art) crystallize. Adorno develops this idea further in *Aesthetic Theory*, where the artwork is understood as a monad that is "both the result of the [dialectical] process and the process itself at a standstill," or, more concisely, "at once a force field and a thing" (179). In this way, "the monadological constitution of artworks in themselves points beyond itself" (*Aesthetic Theory* 180) and does not leave the artwork as a hermetic or self-enclosed, self-referential entity. Like the analogy of a spider's web, the artwork draws the "subject matters" of history, politics, race, culture, and nationalism into relational and penetrative articulation.

While it may seem incongruous to employ Adorno's theories of artwork to understand Walcott's Caribbean poetry, Simon Gikandi's theorization of Caribbean literature implicitly draws on these Adornian ideas. Gikandi departs from the

reflectionist or documentary conventions of Caribbean literary and cultural criticism. He frames his project with the literary problematic of modernism, and argues that Caribbean literature must be considered an important part of this literary problematic because "Caribbean writing is not so much motivated by the desire to recover an 'original' model [...] as by the need to inscribe Caribbean selves and voices within an economy of representation whose institutional and symbolic structures have been established since the 'discovery'" (*Limbo* 10). For Gikandi, Caribbean writing is more than an expression or manifestation of an already existing historical and cultural hybridity. The inscription and production of "selves and voices" through literary texts becomes an important intervention into the "economy of representation" of the "Caribbean imagination" that has set up "institutional and symbolic structures" made up of "its imposed metropolitan identity [Europe] and its desired ancestral image [Africa]," neither of which can be wholly realized nor rejected (*Limbo* 10). Gikandi tracks in "Caribbean fiction" a "shift from a dramatization of the power of the self and the uniqueness of its utterance" all the way to "a moment of a closure [in texts such as Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*] marked by silence and emptiness" (*Limbo* 251). Thus, the images of lyrical polyvocality or representations of mythopoetic figures do not necessarily denote nor refer to a fullness of hybrid histories and irrepressible identities that already exist or are coming into existence; the closures and reconciliations of the literary text "marked by silence and emptiness" do not point to a tidy summation nor an ineffable void. Instead, in Gikandi's formulation, writing becomes one of "the contending discourses" in which "the existence of a gap in language affirms the continuing need for a narrative form that will take into account the contradictory impulses of Caribbean culture" and where "the underprivileged Caribbean subject will find and affirm its

voice" (*Limbo* 251).

This mode of thinking of literature as inscription and intervention also takes into account the political as well as symbolic importance of nationalism as a problematic. Elsewhere, Gikandi discusses Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, a text that has been considered as exhibiting the global conditions of hybridity ascribed to recent Caribbean writing. Gikandi, however, convincingly contends that "while the novel seems to destabilize such properties as modern temporality, the space of the nation, and the foundational moments of culture, its power of critique — its oppositionality — also seems to be dependent on such critiques," because "there is a sense in which the enabling condition of narration is the impossibility of detaching oneself from such compromised axioms as empire, cultural nationalism, and the postcolony" (*Englishness* 210). In retaining the nation as part of the "condition of narration" rather than as a repressive entity that needs to be invalidated, Gikandi's reading of Rushdie refuses the concepts of exile and hybridity because they "have become stock terms in postcolonial literature," and argues that power of Rushdie's text "lies in its jettisoning of even such alternative (postcolonial) terms as *migrancy* and *hybridity*" (*Englishness* 213, original emphasis). There can be no valorization of "exile" as a "painful and yet authorizing" trope of identity against the "illusory identity" of home and nation, because "neither term is endorsed or negated entirely" (*Englishness* 213). Gikandi reads Rushdie's novel along the lines of Adorno's spider web in *Minima Moralia*. The stereotypical metaphors of postcolonialism such as migrancy and hybridity are caught up in the artwork that represents but refuses to reaffirm them. Instead, by pushing these stereotypes to the limit, it crystallizes and makes visible the dynamic relations between politics and culture inherent in nationalism which have been neglected by the attention to dominant

concepts of diaspora and hybridity within global culture.

“Cracked Heirlooms and White Scars”: Derek Walcott’s Poetics of Negation

These dynamic relations between culture and nationalism, language and history, and politics and literary form are conceptualized by Walcott in a series of essays that shuttle between the particular contexts of Saint Lucia, Jamaica, and Trinidad, and the larger transnational Caribbean framework. For example, in a 1957 essay about Jamaica entitled “Society and the Artist,” Walcott argues that history in the Caribbean “is not in the quick political achievements [...] but in the deepening stream of the way we are now learning to think. To see ourselves, not as others see us, but with all the possibilities of the new country we are making.” Walcott further elaborates that “the people of all these islands know that they must share their countries. [...] They are now a people who possess the land in thought and share it” (“Society and the Artist” 15). What is important here is that, even in an early theorization of nationalism and culture, Walcott locates the specific national consciousness of “the new country we are making” — namely, Jamaica — within a larger transnational framework of the Caribbean, or “the people of *all these islands* [who] know that they must share their countries.” The national and the transnational are not opposed; in fact, what ties them together is a shared sense of the “new possibilities” of each country expressed through creative language and “possess[ing] the land in thought.” This is, for Walcott, political consciousness expressed in cultural creativity more than institutionalized activity. Walcott develops this double sense of political consciousness and cultural politics in a later essay: “We have broken up the archipelago into nations, and in each nation we attempt to assert characteristics of the national identity. Everyone knows that these are pretexts of power if such power is

seen as political" ("Culture or Mimicry?" 3). Instead of thinking about nations as assertive identities, Walcott emphasizes the social and cultural work necessary for a politically engaged nationalism: "what energizes our society is the spiritual force of a culture shaping itself, and it can do this without the formula of politics" ("Culture or Mimicry?" 4). The energizing, shaping force of cultural politics is not tied to a definite ideology — "the formula of politics" — or a grand historical narrative that Walcott calls "the Muse of History" ("Muse" 36), which has too often been for others an exclusively national Muse. In challenging this Muse of History, Walcott argues that "history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, memory." The writers inspired by such a muse are "revolutionary," they are "being[s] inhabited by presences, not creature[s] chained to [their] past" ("Muse" 37). The presences that Walcott describes here are the cultural and historical memories brought to the Caribbean from Africa, India, China, and Europe. The figure of the writer inhabited by these presences recalls Walcott's earlier discussion of national consciousness, described as "a people who possess the land in thought and share it" — a physical possession, certainly, but also a mental and spiritual one. Not only do the people of Jamaica possess the land with their contemporaries, they also share it with their forebears; they are not "chained" to the ancestral "past," but are responsible for reworking the memories of dislocation and suffering into a promise of a better future, "in the deepening stream of the way we are now learning to think" ("Society and the Artist" 15).

This growing self-awareness and political consciousness that Caribbean communities have of themselves and their position in the geopolitical framework takes on performative and literary dimensions in Walcott's essay "Meanings," in which he describes his theater group's request for government subsidies:

When people like me ask the state for subsidy, we aren't asking the state to support the arts; we are informing the state, which is as poor and as spiritually degraded as we have been, of its true condition. The state is being asked to share the condition of its artists, to recognize its experience. ("Meanings" 50)

The irony of this appeal is that the theater group's inability to put on a play without financial assistance allows Walcott to transform a routine, bureaucratic application into an instructive if metaphorical scene from a play. But more than the irony is the illuminating sense that such transformations are both necessary and possible in these desperate situations. A self-serving request can transform into an informative and interrogative performance of the mutually "degraded" situation of both artists and the state. In the same way, we may think of the lyrical evocation in *The Antilles* and elsewhere in Walcott's poetry not (as Puri would have it) "a ruse for silence on inequitable relations of power" nor as hapless conjecture because "it posits in advance a unity and equality that has yet to be achieved" but as an affective transformation that points out a glaring lack or inadequacy, analogous to how Walcott's application for state subsidy becomes an instructive and shared moment of mutual critique.

This transformation derives from Walcott's sense of carefully crafted language as a conjugating force. Walcott distinguishes history as time and myth, and distances himself from those who believe in the myth of "elemental man" ("Muse" 37). Those "New World poets" who consider the traditions and forms of European literature as "historical degradation, rejecting it as the language of the [colonial] master" ("Muse" 39) are those who also see in the Caribbean only the ruin and "the shipwreck" of colonialism, such that "the New World offers not elation but cynicism" ("Muse" 42). For Walcott, the veneration of elemental, mythic man and the fixation with the repetition of colonialism's mistakes obscures the understanding of history as *time*, as what Walter

Benjamin would call ruin and rune, out of which the historical relations of the postcolonial situation crystallize into poetry ("Allegory" 176). These historical relations cannot be simply broken down into the colonial and postcolonial, as Walcott illustrates in his discussion of the complexity of language in the Caribbean:

Today, still in many islands, the West Indian poet is faced with a language which he hears but cannot write because there are no symbols for such a language and because the closer he brings hand and word to the precise inflections of the inner language and to the subtlest accuracies of his ear, the more chaotic his symbols will appear on the page, [...] so his function remains the old one of being filter and purifier, never losing the tone and strength of the common speech as he uses the hieroglyphs, symbols, or alphabet of the official one. ("Muse" 49)

Walcott focuses on the role of the poet as "filter and purifier," yet the way in which he glosses these two terms is neither essentialist nor purist. By enjoining the Caribbean poet to never lose "the tone and strength of the common speech as he uses the hieroglyphs, symbols, or alphabet of the official one," Walcott positions the poet as a mediating function between two registers of speech rather than an authorizing subject who wields language.

Walcott's concern is the present, continuous sense of "living" and how poetic language "combines the natural and the marmoreal" and "conjugates both tenses [of past and present] simultaneously," bringing together muscular common speech (ruin) with intricate official vocabulary (rune) in a way that does justice to them both ("Antilles" 70). This conjugation cannot be limited to the Caribbean context. The deeper one delves into the poetic form and history of the local, the larger one's historical and geographical consciousness must become. Walcott captures this paradox towards the end of his essay: "Yet the older and more assured I grew, the stronger my isolation as a poet, the more I needed to become omnivorous about the art and literature of Europe to

understand my own world" (63). But it is in his Nobel lecture "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" that Walcott offers his most arresting elaboration of poetic thought in terms that recall the crystallization of fragments and history we see in Adorno. Here, Walcott talks about watching a village in Trinidad prepare for a performance of the Indian epic, *The Ramayana*. As he witnesses the excited and festive spirit of the performers, he begins "filtering the afternoon with evocations of a lost India" ("Antilles" 68). But then he checks himself and asks -- "Why should India be 'lost' when none of these villagers ever really knew it" ("Antilles" 68)? He then reflects that he is "entitled like any Trinidadian to the ecstasies of their claim," this claim being the villagers' performance of *The Ramayana* which brings their community together, but is not limited to those of Indian descent, for Walcott himself is of mixed parentage. In fact, Walcott realizes that though he is an accomplished poet, he is "only one-eighth the writer [he] might have been had [he] contained all the fragmented languages of Trinidad," but even so, he is still "entitled to the mirrors and crepe-paper temples of the Muslim epic, to the Chinese Dragon Dance, to the rites of the Sephardic Jewish synagogue" ("Antilles" 69). The various fragments, languages, cultures, and histories in Trinidad are distinct but cannot be sealed off from one another. They do not disseminate or dissolve the nation into diaspora. In fact, they gather together aspects and fragments of several diasporic cultures, and claim them as the critical national consciousness of any Caribbean artist:

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. This gathering of broken pieces is the care and pain of the Antilles [...] (69)

For Walcott, Trinidad's national consciousness and culture cannot be deduced from a set

formula of politics; they are not a pretext of power, but rather a loving labor of “care and pain” that reassembles a fitful past into a livable present. Walcott sees nationalism not as a native identity, but as a crystallization of “broken pieces” into “cracked heirlooms,” and this is (to use his earlier term) “revolutionary.” The cultural politics of nationalism in Trinidad become evident when we recall that Walcott is rebutting another Trinidadian Nobel Laureate, V. S. Naipaul. Naipaul claims that “nothing has ever been made in the Caribbean” because there is no originality in its culture, only mimicry (“Culture or Mimicry?” 8-9). But we can see from this passage about the broken vase that Walcott is making a political claim in a cultural register, turning Naipaul's own “nothingness” against him -- as Walcott says: “Nothing will always be created in the West Indies, [...] because what will come out of there is like nothing [any]one has ever seen before” (“Culture or Mimicry?” 8-9). The idea of “nothing,” for Walcott, does not mean an emptiness or a vacuum. Instead, it is the condition of possibility out of which a cultural politics and a political consciousness of nationalism can emerge within a transnational and relational framework.

The solitary work undertaken by Walcott paradoxically requires a relational understanding of the historical forces that make up his “own world.” Furthermore, in the context of the passage from “The Antilles,” the poetic function of being a “filter and purifier” becomes the “glue that fits the pieces” of the broken vase, the “love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments.” This “care and pain” of Caribbean poetry connects the African and Asiatic fragments, the Caribbean present and its colonial and postcolonial past, and out of this connection crystallizes the living element of poetry. Furthermore, the love that reassembles the broken fragments of the vase is not identified with any particular speaker or person. By withholding the subject from whom

this love emanates, Walcott foregrounds the construction of self and subject through language, as the “white scars” produced by the “sealing of [the poem’s] original shape.” Subjectivity emerges out of the reassembling of “African and Asiatic fragments” rather than an already accomplished “symmetry” or “whole” that we take ‘for granted.’ This recalls the theater group’s request for state subsidy in “Meanings”: the bureaucratic request becomes not simply a proxy act that furthers its own subjective interest, but a negation of the nation-state’s own subjective centrality and apparent superiority vis-a-vis Walcott’s theater group. To use Adorno’s terms from *Minima Moralia*, Walcott’s subsidy request becomes a thoughtful act of “informing the state,” of “open[ing] up one cell of reality” and then “penetrat[ing] the next” without doing violence to either subject or subsuming one under the other, for “the state is being asked to share the condition of its artists”. Yet both Walcott’s theater group and the state have been objectified in the “true condition” of material and spiritual poverty and degradation, the awareness of which could only emerge once both subjects have been torn “away from the immediacy” of their lives and articulated in a recognized experience mediated by Walcott’s act. Walcott, despite not consciously making or crafting a work of art in the short episode from “Meanings,” nonetheless demonstrates a sense of how even a mundane act can perform an artful intervention into a political process, and the structural relationship between culture (Walcott’s theater group) and nationalism (the state authorities).

The Grey Crystal Haze of Art: Walcott’s Lyric Poems

Bruce King details Walcott’s peregrinations: he had marital problems as well as an affair with a member of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop which led to his resignation from the theater group; he traveled frequently to the USA, Britain, and Europe, and

settled into a lectureship at Harvard, and later a faculty position at Boston University¹. Paul Breslin argues that the 1981 publication of *The Fortunate Traveller* marks “a restless decade of shuttling between the Caribbean and North America, with increasingly frequent trips to Europe as well” (216). He contends, further, that the increase in poetic self-reflexiveness in Walcott’s poetry from this period can be understood in terms of his “increased contact with U.S. writing and its intellectual ambience” as well as his “attenuated relation to the Caribbean, which deprived him of the naturalizing trope of an Antaeus-like power derived from place” (217). While it is possible to read Walcott’s creative output in accordance to his life history and career trajectory, my own reading of his work focuses on the elaborations and reconfigurations of literary figures that are both naturalizing and exilic. These elaborations, in the lyric poetry of the 1970s and 1980s as well as his narrative pieces “The Schooner *Flight*” and “The Fortunate Traveller,” are key structural features in his later epic *Omeros* that connect the national consciousness of the Caribbean with Africa. In his shorter lyric poems, Walcott develops an understanding of the artwork as a physical and a temporal moment in which historical and political forces are both crystallized as well as initiated as forceful thought by what he calls “the toil that is balance” (43). Using Walcott’s conceptualization of artwork in the two shorter poems “Sea Grapes” and “To Return to Trees,” I turn to the longer pieces “The Schooner *Flight*” and “The Fortunate Traveller” to examine how they refract the terms of hybridity, cosmopolitanism, and anti-nationalism with which they are most habitually associated. I argue that these two poems illuminate the interrelationship of art and life in a way that recasts nationalism as a problematic that

¹ See Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life*, chapters 19-23 for an exhaustive account of Walcott’s personal life and career during this decade.

still holds a liberating promise, a promise that can only be figured through the strenuous work of an artistic imagination if it is to avoid the pitfalls of neo-colonialism and predatory globalization.

In the title poem of *Sea Grapes*, Walcott's speaker identifies the Caribbean with the Aegean of classical Greek literature and mythology, and the first two stanzas of the poem take up the familiar, wandering figure of Odysseus on his journey back to Ithaca:

That sail which leans on light,
tired of islands,
a schooner beating up the Caribbean

for home, could be Odysseus,
home-bound on the Aegean;
that father and husband's

longing, under gnarled sour grapes, is
like the adulterer hearing Nausicaa's name
in every gull's outcry ("Sea Grapes," 1-9)

The alliteration of "l" sounds in the first line gives us an impression of movement that is "light" in the physical sense of fleet-footedness. But the opening image qualifies that movement as "tired" and leaning, unable to stand upright or lacking strength; furthermore, the schooner's tiredness robs it of fleetness and becomes ominous when we are told that the schooner is "beating up the Caribbean." This might suggest a plodding trudge, but could also mean physical assault and violence on the numerous "islands" that it has grown weary of. A further tension is introduced in the next two stanzas with the explicit evocation of Odysseus — the schooner, which began the poem as a vessel bearing the poetic force of the Caribbean, now becomes coded with the ambivalence associated with the famous Greek hero. The purposiveness of the schooner's homeward journey is now undermined by an Odyssean "longing" which is not "for home," but rather for "Nausicaa's name" and the detour of infidelity and illicit liaison. The formal

breaks in the stanzas also disrupt the smooth flow of the sense of two important lines, namely “a schooner beating up the Caribbean // for home” (3-4) and “that father and husband’s // longing” (6-7), heightening the uneasiness and disconnection of the initial identification between the Caribbean and the Aegean. The second half of the poem expands on the tension and violence implied in line 3 by evoking the Trojan War as a framework to discuss the purpose of literature and art:

This brings nobody peace. The ancient war
between obsession and responsibility
will never finish and has been the same

for the sea-wanderer or the one on shore
now wriggling on his sandals to walk home,
since Troy sighed its last flame

and the blind giant’s boulder heaved the trough
from whose groundswell the great hexameters come
to the conclusions of exhausted surf.

The classics can console. But not enough. (“Sea Grapes” 10-18)

Here Walcott’s speaker argues that the evocation of a classical frame (that of the Trojan War) to discuss both the Caribbean and its poetics is inadequate. “This brings nobody peace,” he asserts, because the “age-old” question of art for art’s sake (the “obsession” of the “adulterer”) and that of social purpose and “responsibility” (the “father and husband’s” duty) cannot be resolved. This irresolvable situation stems from the sheer enervation and loss of vitality in the form and content of the classical references themselves, or what the poem calls “the conclusions of exhausted surf.” But the last line, made up of two short declarative sentences, stands both as a statement and a challenge: “The classics can console. But not enough” (18). If the classics offer “not enough” consolation regarding the purpose and meaningfulness of art due to their sheer enervation, then Walcott’s poem implies two possibilities: first, rephrase the question in

a different way other than the “ancient war / between obsession and responsibility”; second, find a different framework of conceptualizing a Caribbean poetics aside from the identification with the Aegean and classical Greek verse evoked in this poem.

Both these possibilities are illuminated and elaborated in another poem in this collection, entitled “To Return to the Trees.” Here, Walcott’s speaker begins his conceptualization of the work of art by observing “not only the sea” (marking a departure from the maritime milieu of “Sea Grapes”) but “the changes on Morne Coco Mountain” (18) in Trinidad:

from flagrant sunrise
to its ashen end;
grey has grown strong to me,

it’s no longer neutral,
no longer the dirty flag
of courage going under, (“To Return to the Trees” 19-24)

On one hand, the “flagrant sunrise” and the “ashen end” of Morne Coco Mountain parallel the rise and fall of Troy and classical Greek verse with their “last flame” and “exhausted surf,” but in this poem, the “ashen end” of the twilight mountainscape becomes an inspiration: “grey has grown strong to me.” Walcott’s speaker’s affirmation of this newfound sense of “grey” rejects the ambivalence of the “ancient war” between art for art’s sake and art as responsibility that “brings nobody peace” in “Sea Grapes.” Here, the artistic impulse is not rendered in terms of a “war” at all, as it “no longer” involves acts of martial valor or “courage going under.” Instead, Walcott’s poem envisions the “grey”ness of the work of art in terms that accord with Theodor Adorno’s concept of an artwork in *Aesthetic Theory* as “an immanent, crystallized process at a standstill” (180) or “both the result of the process and the process itself at a standstill” (179) — and by process here Adorno refers to “the relation of its [the artwork’s] whole

and parts” but “without being reducible to one side or the other” (178):

it is speckled with hues
like quartz, it's as
various as boredom,

grey now is a crystal
haze, a dull diamond,
stone-dusted and stoic,

grey is the heart at peace,
tougher than the warrior
as it bestrides factions, (“To Return to the Trees” 25-33)

Formally speaking, the tercets of this poem contrast with those of “Sea Grapes” in that the sense of each unit is not broken nor confounded by the stanza breaks. Moreover, each tercet bears an aphoristic quality that builds on the associations offered by the previous one — for example, “grey is now a crystal / haze, a dull diamond, / stone-dusted and stoic” draws on the description of “speckled” quartz in the previous stanza, and the adjective “stoic” in the last lines prepares us for a shift in register from minerals to emotions in the next stanza, where grey becomes “the heart at peace.” In other words, it is as if each stanza illustrates the crystalline quality both Walcott and Adorno ascribe to the work of art, either as “a crystal // haze, a dull diamond” or a “crystallized process at a standstill.”

This sense of the work of art as a process at a delicate standstill is complemented by the poem’s deft rendering of the enormous forces immanent to such a crystalline framework. An emphasis on the “crystalline” aspect of the artwork risks falling into an autotelic concept of art as self-sufficient and self-referential; “To Return to the Trees” does not stop there, for it describes the “force field” aspect of the artwork just as well in the next three stanzas:

it is the great pause

when the pillars of the temple
rest on Samson's palms

and are held, held,
that moment
when the heavy rock of the world

like a child sleeps
on the trembling shoulders of Atlas
and his own eyes close,

the toil that is balance. ("To Return to the Trees" 34-43)

Here, Walcott's poem draws on Biblical as well as Greek mythological references, but unlike the story of Odysseus in "Sea Grapes," these references do not form an entire interpretive framework for the poem, but become incorporated into its relational scheme. The Biblical allusion to how "the pillars of the temple / rest on Samson's palms" recalls the crystalline structure of the artwork in the image of a man standing with his palms supporting two pillars, but our thoughts, set in motion by the Old Testament allusion, cannot miss the cataclysmic force of Samson's strength that is deferred and yet heightened by "the great pause" of the poem. Similarly, the childlike sleep of the "the heavy rock of the world" upon "the trembling shoulders of Atlas" belies the mythical giant's own impending slumber and possible release of his burden; the "grey"ness of art becomes that moment where such a catastrophic release can be figured and comprehended in thought, deferred but also precipitous. To put it another way, Walcott's speaker expounds on the color grey — by this point in the piece standing for the crafting of poetry and poetry itself — to give us a breathtaking analogy of how historical, political, and social forces (represented by the figures of Samson and the world on Atlas's shoulders) are immanent to the artwork. Thought itself is catalyzed once we recognize in the apparent harmony and fullness of the whole artwork the

laborious relations and telling gaps between the work's constitutive parts, or, "the toil that is balance."

Nationalism and Transnationalism as Complementary Forces in *Another Life* and "The Schooner Flight"

The balance or congruence that Walcott strives to achieve between culture and politics, the national and transnational, comes across as both autobiography and a discussion of the social significance of poetry and painting. his narrative poem, *Another Life*, published in 1972. In this autobiographical poem, Walcott focuses on his home country of Saint Lucia, and emphasizes the important role that artists and writers can play in forming a national consciousness *vis-a-vis* the state and global capital. Early in the poem, Walcott expresses his distrust for what we would call official nationalism, or the patriotic love of one's country sponsored by the colonial and postcolonial state. Here is an exchange between a schoolmaster and his students:

"Boy! Name the great harbours of the world!"
 "Sydney! Sir."
 "San Franceesco!"
 "Naples, sah!"
 "And what about Castries?"
 "Sah, Castries ees a coaling station and
 der twenty-seventh best harba in der wor'!
 In eet the entire Breetesh Navy can be heeden!"
 "What is the motto of Saint Lucia, boy?"
 "*Statio haud malefida carinis.*"
 "Sir!"
 "Sir!"
 "And what does that mean?"
 "Sir, a safe anchorage for sheeps!" (690-703)

The satirical humor is evident in the way Walcott contrasts the schoolmaster's stentorian questions with the students' answers, rendered in vernacular speech. Furthermore, both

national and colonial authority are ironically undermined by the students' sincere and enthusiastic responses. Castries, the port capital of Saint Lucia, is not only a "coaling station," but it can hide "the entire Breetesh Navy," which, rendered in a student's voice, becomes a cowardly herd of "sheeps" instead of a mighty fleet of ships. Walcott satirizes the idea of a national identity expressed as a motto given by colonial authority - what he calls the formula of politics. But what is also important is that within this schoolroom recitation of historical facts, Walcott alerts us to Saint Lucia's positioning within a transnational network of maritime connections. Although its capital Castries may only be "der twenty-sevent best harba in the worl'," Walcott's poem places it in comparison with the great harbours of Sydney, San Francisco, and Naples. There is in this passage an implicit consciousness of Saint Lucia as a nation defined in relation to other port cities and their respective nations. This national consciousness formed within transnationalism becomes more evident in another passage in *Another Life*:

here was a life older than geography,
as the leaves of edible roots opened their pages
at the child's last lesson, Africa, heart-shaped,

and the lost Arawak hieroglyphs and signs
were razed from slates by sponges of the rain,
their symbols mixed with lichen,

the archipelago like a broken root
divided among tribes, while trees and men
laboured assiduously, silently to become

whatever their given sounds resembled (1233-1242)

On one hand, Walcott's image of Africa as an "edible root" and a "heart-shaped" lesson for the Saint Lucian child suggests a diasporic longing for Africa. Similarly, the evocation of "lost Arawak hieroglyphs and signs" gesture towards a recovery of a native identity before colonialism, "a life older than geography." But Walcott reminds us that

the “symbols” of Arawak culture have been “razed from slates by sponges of rain,” while the memory of Africa is “like a broken root / divided among tribes.” Neither image suggests the possibility of recovering either an African or an Arawak identity, although both remain, like “opened pages” and “mixed” patches of “lichen”, as part of Saint Lucia’s collective memory. What is more important for Walcott in this passage is the idea of “trees and men” who “laboured assiduously” to create a new life and identity from the given conditions on the ground, or “whatever their given sounds resembled.” The visual, static images of leaves, pages and hieroglyphs early in the passage are no longer “silently” suffering, but, through Walcott’s assiduous poetic and cultural labor, become “given sounds” — the images are given a voice and an utterance.

This cultural politics is a vital part of Walcott’s implicit embrace of a certain kind of national consciousness. Near the end of his poem, Walcott learns that Harry Simmons, his old teacher who taught him how to paint as a child, has committed suicide. Walcott proceeds to criticize the Saint Lucian government’s attempts at creating national identity, an identity that emphasizes globalization over its own people’s welfare. Walcott contrasts the state’s economic opportunism with Harry Simmons’s artistic attempts to create a national culture among the Saint Lucian people.

all o’dem big boys, so, dem ministers,
 ministers of culture, ministers of development,
 the green blacks, and their old toms,
 and all the syntactical apologists of the Third World
 explaining why their artists die,
 by their own hands, Magicians of the New Vision.
 Screaming the same shit.
 Those who peel, from their own leprous flesh, their names,
 who chafe and nurture the scars of rusted chains,
 like primates favouring scabs, those who charges tickets
 for another free ride on the middle-passage,
 those who explain to the peasant why he is African,
 [.....]

Who want a new art,
and their artists dying in the old way. (2946-2957, 2966-2967)

Walcott sees “dem ministers” of Saint Lucia as “syntactical apologists” who rhetorically and economically position his country into the category of the “Third World,” thus turning Saint Lucia into a Third World nation. Walcott emphasizes that these politicians are cunning persuaders or “Magicians,” who try to “explain to the peasant why he is African” rather than Saint Lucian. This emphasis on African diasporic roots rather than a Saint Lucian national consciousness is, for Walcott, part of the state’s economic exploitation of its people, such that the state “charge[s] tickets for another free ride on the middle-passage.” The island regresses back into colonial enslavement while the ministers line their pockets. The “new art” that these ministers demand transforms Saint Lucian national culture into objects that can be readily consumed and circulated in the culture industry of globalization:

They had not changed, they knew only
the autumnal hint of hotel rooms
the sea’s engine of air-conditioners,
and the waitress in national costume
and the horsemen galloping past the single wave
across the line of Martinique, the horse or *la mer*
out of Gauguin by the Tourist Board.
Hotel, hotel, hotel, hotel, hotel, and a club: The Bitter End. (3572-3579)

Here, nationalism is reduced to “the waitress in national costume,” an object of a thriving tourist industry in Saint Lucia, an industry whose proliferation is signified by the monotonous repetition of “hotel, hotel, hotel, hotel, hotel” as well as the objectification of Saint Lucia’s neighboring country Martinique as a replica of Gauguin’s painting, possibly commissioned by Saint Lucia’s own “Tourist Board.” Saint Lucia is threatened with the “Bitter End” of becoming a series of hotels and a club for foreigners, instead of the progressive and liberating society that motivated its anti-colonial

nationalism.

In contrast, Walcott describes Harry Simmons's art as intimately connected to the lives of those he lived among and painted:

People entered his understanding
like a wayside country church,
they had built him themselves.
It was they who had smoothed the wall
of his clay-coloured forehead,
who made of his rotundity an earthy
useful object
holding the clear water of their simple troubles
[.....]
and he is a man no more
but the fervour and intelligence
of a whole country (3135-3142)

Harry Simmons's death paradoxically allows him to live on in the hearts and minds of Saint Lucians, for Walcott avers that "he is a man no more / but the fervour and intelligence / of a whole country" (3150-3152). Walcott elaborates what he learnt from Harry Simmons: an "understanding" that artists bear a responsibility to the "people" of their community, and that this responsibility can be understood in national terms: "They had built him themselves," Walcott says, and Simmons's life and work becomes "the fervour and intelligence of a whole country." Harry Simmons's art does not resolve the "simple troubles" of the people, unlike the ministers of culture and development who want Saint Lucia to become once again a land of displaced Africans. Instead, the image of Simmons himself as a "clay-coloured" and "earthy useful object" reminds us of the broken vase that is lovingly reassembled in Walcott's Nobel Prize speech.

Walcott's poetic image of clear water in a vessel, and fragments reassembled into a broken vase suggest a constellation of culture, politics, and history that make up the nation of Saint Lucia. The "care and pain" he describes in his Nobel speech parallels the

“fervour and intelligence” in *Another Life*, and both remind us of Edward Said’s first two senses of nationalism: as political consciousness and as cultural politics. Walcott’s poem acknowledges that Saint Lucia is a community made up of multiple peoples, histories, and cultures from other lands, and that Saint Lucia’s future both depends on these transnational connections but is also threatened by its flip side: global capital and tourism. Walcott’s poem engages a residual nationalism that reveals the unevenness and the problems facing the national community. It does not resolve these difficulties by dissolving or deterritorializing the nation into diaspora. Instead, it sounds a cautiously optimistic note, what Walcott calls “teetering and tough in unabashed unhope” (3594), similar to that in the very first essay I quoted about “Society and the Artist.” Nationalism does not revolve around “quick political achievements,” but involves “the deepening stream of the way we are now learning to think,” to think about “the possibilities of the new country we are making” (15).

We may understand Walcott’s residual nationalism as this process of reassembling the fragments of history, culture, and politics through poetic language, or (to use the figures of his earlier lyric poems) the crysalline haze and the laborious balance. The national and historical significance of these figures is further elaborated in in his long poem “The Schooner Flight,” which begins his 1979 collection *The Star-Apple Kingdom*. In brief, the poem tracks the speaker, Shabine, a sailor of mixed European and African ancestry, as he journeys on the schooner *Flight* from various islands and places in the Caribbean, and marks Shabine’s encounters and engagements with the history of colonial conquest, slavery, and revolutionary independence throughout these islands. The poem ends with the *Flight* engulfed in a sudden storm, and a transfigured Shabine delivering his benediction to the islands “from the depths of the sea” (Canto 11, 51).

Paul Breslin, in his reading of “The Schooner *Flight*,” closely links the poem’s creation with the poet’s personal difficulties with his marriage as well as the Trinidad Theatre Company, such that “knowing the circumstances, one can hardly help reading the poem as grounded in autobiography, preoccupied as it is with the sundering of ties to marriage and nation and with a quest for self-transformation” (189). While “The Schooner *Flight*” does distance itself from any explicit national identification, nonetheless the self-transformation that Breslin suggests may be thought of as a re-articulation of nationalism, or the relationships between self, culture, and politics within a transnational framework rather than a complete sundering of the self through poetic disavowal. I suggest “The Schooner *Flight*” illustrates a residual nationalism by first, reiterating the aesthetic ideas that I inferred from in Walcott’s earlier poems, and second, by evoking figures who represent the dominant concepts of diasporic hybridity and then challenging and extending them to reveal the persistence of nationalism as political and cultural negotiation rather than as objectified identities.

In formal terms, the poem begins with an image of the departing Shabine standing in the yard of his lover’s house that recalls Walcott’s elaboration of “grey” as a simultaneously crystalline and motive structure in “To Return to the Trees”:

Out in the yard turning grey in the dawn,
I stood like a stone and nothing else move
but the cold sea rippling like galvanize
and the nail holes of stars in the sky roof,
till the wind start to interfere with the trees. (Canto 1 6-10)

Shabine and his surroundings are caught in a frozen instant, poised on the verge of portentous movement. Even the sea and stars have their apparent motions described in ways that reinforce their solidity and stillness in physical terms: the sea is “rippling” like “galvanize[d]” metal, while the stars are like “nail holes” pierced in “the sky roof.” This

description of Shabine standing “like a stone” in the yard “turning grey in the dawn” immediately signals to us that we are not in the presence of an autobiographical self; in other words, Shabine is not a figure that stands in for Walcott the poet or any other Caribbean subject position, but rather a figure which is part of “The Schooner *Flight*”’s aesthetic force, “stone-dusted and stoic” (to use a phrase from “To Return to the Trees”). Furthermore, the “wind” that snaps the stillness of this passage and sets the poem in motion is the same wind that will have an important part to play in Shabine’s role both as a sailor and a poet, as he says at the end of canto 1: “my common language go be the wind” (75). For Shabine, the craft of poetry is not a transcendental act that lifts him out of the lifeworld of the poem, but one that is immanently associated with his own vocation. Towards the end of the first canto of the poem Shabine adopts the register of shipboard labor to describe his own poetic craft:

[...] Well, when I write
each phrase go be soaked in salt;
I go draw and knot every line as tight
as ropes in this rigging; in simple speech
my common language go be the wind,
my pages the sails of the schooner *Flight*. (Canto 1 71-76)

The image or conceptual metaphor of the ship has become important in postcolonial and cultural studies ever since Paul Gilroy introduced it as a Bakhtinian chronotope in his groundbreaking transnational project, *The Black Atlantic*. However, I believe the eponymous schooner in Walcott’s text does not serve as such a chronotope, and in fact challenges some of Gilroy’s premises. While I am sympathetic to Gilroy’s attempt to articulate a project that challenges what he calls the “cultural insiderism” of nationalizing narratives (3), Walcott’s poem challenges the claim that “the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean”

forms “a central organising principle for this enterprise” which is “the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation” Gilroy terms “the black Atlantic” (4). “The Schooner *Flight*” does not “focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland” (Gilroy 4). As we shall see later in the poem, Shabine’s own encounter with the middle passage in canto 5 is not one of remembrance or commemoration. For now, what is important in the lines from canto 1 cited earlier is the artistic conjunction of two figures — sailor and ship — through the deceptively “simple speech” of poetic structure. This conjunction, however, stops short of identifying or reducing the craft of the poet to the work of a sailor, because it does not reduce the poem as artwork to life or the circumstances that allow the creation of art. In other words, while sailing becomes an analogy for elaborating the work of poetic art, for example in the simile “draw and knot every line as tight / as ropes in this rigging,” Shabine does not employ the ship as an overarching metaphor for the poem, thus there is no identification between the tenor of the poem and the vehicle of the ship. Instead, the comparison of Shabine’s working out of a poem to his working onboard a ship recalls the descriptions of Samson and Atlas in “To Return to the Trees”: all three figures are intimately connected with physical objects, and the conjunction of the figure with the object generates a motive force. For Shabine, unlike Samson and Atlas, this force is more explicit in its purpose, for it is Shabine’s “common language” that will propel the *Flight* and the poem along, for this language will be the “wind” that blows “the sails of the schooner.”

Thematically, canto 1 also challenges the focus on Caribbean identity as hybrid or creolized (see my discussion earlier in this chapter regarding anglophone Caribbean concepts of hybridity). In a well-known passage from the middle of the canto 1, Shabine

narrates the origin of his name and his background:

a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes
 that they nickname Shabine, the patois
 for any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw
 when these slums of empire was paradise.
 I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
 I had a sound colonial education,
 I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
 and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (Canto 1 36-43)

Shabine turns out to be a local appellation for “any red nigger,” and this description seems to suggest that he stands for the mixed-race inhabitants of the Caribbean. But this can be refuted on two counts. First, the poem emphasizes that Shabine is a figure of *poiesis* (like Samson and Atlas in “The Return to Trees”) rather than someone who corresponds to actually existing individual or collective subjects. Second, a formal analysis of lines 39-43 challenges the claim that the sea-loving Shabine is representative of Caribbean hybridity because he has “Dutch, nigger, and English” in him and that this makes him, if not a “nobody,” then someone who stands for “a nation” of racial and cultural heterogeneity. Rhetorically, the first three lines are marked by asyndeton: no conjunctions join them in causal or subordinating relationship, thus the fourth line “and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation,” does not necessarily follow as a result of the mixing of “Dutch, nigger, and English” in the preceding line. Moreover, the ABAB rhyme scheme points us to the rhyming of “education” with “I'm a nation” that suggests Shabine's national consciousness emerges not because of the mixing of European and African ancestry, but rather from the “sound colonial education” he received. From this perspective, national consciousness becomes more a matter of knowledge, learning, and art rather than ancestry and race, and this point is emphasized later in the canto where Shabine avers that “I loved them, my children, my wife, my home; / I loved them as

poets love the poetry / that kills them, as drowned sailors the sea" (67-69). Shabine's love and affection for his family and home are not expressed in patriotic sentiments, but instead in artistic terms of death and violence that recall Theodor Adorno's discussion of how the "life" of artworks "preys on death" and how "they kill what they objectify by tearing it away from the immediacy of its life" (*Aesthetic Theory* 133). The schooner *Flight* (with its name suggesting the release or "flight" of thought), together with Shabine (himself a poet participating in the elaborative process of Walcott's poem) both eventually succumb to this predatory aspect of the artwork that objectifies aspects of reality and sets in motion a process of thought that (in Adorno's words from *Minima Moralia*) "opens up one cell of reality" and then "penetrate[s] the next." Moreover, Walcott's poem does not espouse a transnational identification or subject position premised on the history of trans-Atlantic slavery. This is illustrated most clearly in Shabine's refusal to sympathize with or lament the suffering of multitudes when he and the *Flight* encounter the Middle Passage in canto 5, to which I will now turn.

Contrary to Paul Gilroy's use of the chronotope of ships in *The Black Atlantic*, Walcott's Shabine's identification with the African slaves brought across the Middle Passage is not as strong or pronounced as his affinity for the sailors working onboard the ships commanded by famous historical admirals. In this canto the *Flight* encounters two fleets of ghostly ships, the first being "a rustling forest of ships / with sails dry like paper," (Canto 5 9-10) setting up a similarity with the schooner *Flight*, which has as its sails the pages of Shabine's own poetry. Shabine sees "great admirals" on the deck like "Rodney, Nelson, de Grasse," but more importantly focuses on "the hoarse orders / they gave those Shabines" (Canto 5 16-18) under their command. But when Shabine sees the next fleet of "slave ships" flying "flags of all nations" with "our fathers below

deck too deep [...] / to hear us shouting" (Canto 5 29-30), his response is muted, pensive, even noncommittal. Shabine supposes that their ancestral fathers cannot hear the shouting of their present-day descendants since they are physically and temporally "too deep," and his response is to "stop shouting" entirely (Canto 5 31). The poet-sailor then shrugs off the entire encounter with a dismissive question: "Who knows / who his grandfather is, much less his name?" (Canto 5 32). Here, Shabine obviously cuts off any nostalgia or diasporic longing for a real or imagined Africa as the land of "our fathers" with his refusal to search for genealogical roots. More important is the poem's questioning of the routed form of transnationalism implicit in Gilroy's concept of the black Atlantic with its "flags of all nations." In other words, Shabine is part of the poem's residual nationalism that takes up and extends Gilroy's chronotope of being "rooted in and routed through the special stress that grows with the effort involved in trying to face (at least) two ways at once" (3). This may become clearer when we remember that Shabine focuses on "those Shabines," predecessors of himself (that "red nigger who love the sea") who work on board naval vessels rather than the slaves held captive in the holds of slaving vessels. At one level, Shabine may represent the actual, hybrid peoples of the Caribbean and the actual descendants of these slaves from Africa. But what is important here is that his "memory revolve[s] / on all sailors before [him]" (Canto 5 26-27). The poem foregrounds, through Shabine's memory, the vocational expertise of those sailors "before" or preceding Shabine, extending a diasporic identity into a professional *camaraderie* and also (given the structural intertwining of Shabine's poetic craft and his maritime skills) emphasizing the importance of such craft and skills over any rooting in or routing through the Middle Passage.

"The Schooner *Flight*" thus offers an artistic rendering of Shabine and the

schooner as figures of poetic thought rather than representational subjects , and it is through the movement of these two figures in the time and space of the poem that enacts the work's circumnational moment. On one hand, the poem expresses a clear disappointment with and disapproval of the authority figures who govern the various Caribbean nation-states. The poem links oppressive nationalism and corrupt government with the only explicitly hybrid figure: Shabine's former employer O'Hara. O'Hara is a "big government man" (Canto 2 1) is described as a "minister-monster who smuggled the booze" (Canto 2 24) and "a half-Syrian saurian" (Canto 2 25). The alliteration of "minister" and "monster" and the sibilance of "half-Syrian saurian" emphasize how O'Hara's hybridity becomes a savage and bestial bastardization rather than a liberating or emancipative mixing of races and roles. Furthermore, in canto 9 as the *Flight* approaches Dominica, Shabine and Vince have a conversation about modernization and "Progress", in which Vince delightfully exclaims that "One day go be planes only, no more boat" (Canto 9 5), to which Shabine retorts that "Progress leaving all we small islands behind" (Canto 9 8) and if they were to ask the original Carib inhabitants of the Dominica they would find that Progress had "kill[ed] them by millions, some in war, / some by forced labour dying in the mines" (Canto 9 12-13). "Progress" does not lead to any tangible improvement, but becomes "history's dirty joke" (Canto 9 16): it becomes a euphemism for the history of conquest, massacre, and subjugation of the Caribbean peoples, and an obscene and "dirty" reminder of the regression (as opposed to progression) of neo-colonial regimes where ministers like O'Hara have not been "guardians of the poor" (Canto 2 21) but instead "smuggled the booze" for their own pleasure. But on the other hand, despite the hostility towards the governments of these Caribbean countries, the poem nonetheless cherishes national

consciousness and the liberating promise of nationalism, and both this consciousness and promise are presented in artistically evocative language rather than rousing political speech. Canto 3, entitled "Shabine Leaves the Republic," seems to suggest a departure from the political and national community of Trinidad, identified earlier as "The Limer's Republic" (Canto 2 34). But the canto begins with Shabine's famous declaration that "I had no nation now but the imagination" (Canto 3 1), which can be read not as a refutation of nationalism, but a refiguring of nationalism as a problematic in imaginative terms. In other words, Walcott's poem presents an either-or dilemma in which progress and neo-colonial regimes have trapped popular nationalism "between / the Police Marine Branch and Hotel Venezuela" (Canto 3 23-24), therefore no political solution presents itself unless the terms of the dilemma are recast. Although Walcott's poem does not explicitly schematize such a revision, the poetic and visionary rendering of both Maria Concepcion and the young men in canto 3 might point out certain pertinent aspects. Even though Shabine declares "I no longer believed in the revolution," (Canto 3 20) his lack of political conviction is immediately linked with another, personal loss in the next line: "I was losing faith in the love of my woman" (Canto 3 21). The political inflection of love and romance in canto 3 affects the resolution of the relationship between Shabine and Maria Concepcion at the end of the poem, where, after the storm, Shabine sees "the veiled face of Maria Concepcion / marrying the ocean, then drifting away" (Canto 11 360). Shabine's relationship with Maria is transformed from anxiety and doubt into acceptance and release, as the focus of his amorous problems becomes part of "the ocean"; we might infer the acceptance and release of Maria will allow for a corresponding acceptance and release of the political dilemma that led Shabine to lose faith in "the revolution" in canto 3.

In fact, the “young men” who mobilize against the state police and the Hotel Venezuela are described in terms similar to Maria Concepcion at the end of the poem:

Young men without flags
using shirts, their chests waiting for holes.
They kept marching into the mountains, and
their noise ceased as foam sinks into sand.
They sank in the bright hills like rain, every one
in his own nimbus, leaving shirts in the street,
and the echo of power at the end of the street. (Canto 3 25-31)

On one hand, this can be read as a lament for the utter defeat of political mobilization, emphasizing Shabine’s loss of faith in organized revolution mentioned above. Also, the poetic transformation of the “young men” who (it is implied) are killed or otherwise neutralized by the government into a gentle shower of “rain” that “sank in the bright hills” or as “foam” that “sinks into sand” may be read as evading or romanticizing the pressing issues of oppression and state violence. However, we might also read the description of Maria Concepcion and these flagless young men in light of Walcott’s comment about asking the state to subsidize his theater group in his essay “Meanings.” As Walcott avers in “Meanings,” to ask the state for a subsidy is not so much a plea for financial support but rather a request that the state recognize the mutual degradation and poverty it shares with the theater group and society’s artists. In the same way, in these passages Maria and the young men are not beautified so that readers may affirm or exhort their dignity or passion in the face of implacable violence. Rather their affective transformation into a visionary or mythopoetic condition points out a glaring lack and inadequacy of both alternatives in the either-or dilemma of Trinidad society caught between the Police Marine Branch and Hotel Venezuela. Certainly the young men seem to have been chastened and routed by the repressive state apparatus, but the poem represents their “shirts in the street” and “the echo of power at the end of the

street" as a legacy that haunts and disturbs the neo-colonial regime, such that in "the Senate," "the judges, they say, still sweat in carmine" (Canto 3 32,33). It is the authority figures in the repressive state who suffer, sweat, and bleed, whereas the young men have each turned into a "nimbus," an aura or glow that represents the diffusion of national consciousness, like rain falling on "the bright hills." This metaphor of rain is taken up once more at the end of the poem, where the transformed Shabine finds that "across [his] own face, like the face of the sun / a light rain was falling" (Canto 11 8-9) and invokes a similar benediction upon the Caribbean islands: "Fall gently, rain, on the sea's upturned face / like a girl showering; make these islands fresh / as Shabine once knew them!" (Canto 11 10-12). Maria, the young men, and ultimately Shabine himself, are poetically rendered into motive forces: Maria is "drifting away" with her marriage to the ocean, the young men sink like foam but fall like rain over the countryside, and Shabine, after his benediction of rainfall "from this bowsprit" of the *Flight* (Canto 11 26), settles down into a state of work and rest that again recalls artwork's crystallization and field of force. This can be seen from the way Shabine ends the poem in a state of physical work and intellectual learning while blending and "cotching" (propping up against something) with the schooner's armature: "I stop talking now. I work, then I read, / cotching under a lantern hooked to the mast" (Canto 11 43-44). On the question of work and labor, George Lamming offers a thought-provoking definition of the Caribbean: "the most authentic meaning of the word 'Caribbean' is the organization of labour within the region by people particularly from Asia and Africa and the responses of their labour to imperial rule, including the way in which they organized successful rebellions against this rule" (3). The "The Schooner *Flight*" artistically renders historical and political forces into affective and transformative figures like Shabine and the schooner.

In doing so, it performs and allows the organization and intervention of critical thought that does not alight upon into a subject position for political action, self-affirmation, or identification. Instead, it clears a conceptual path for a framework in which such action and affirmation might possibly be imagined. I now turn to “The Fortunate Traveller” and “The Season of Phantasmal Peace,” two poems that mark the internal limits of a Eurocentric framework of knowledge and image another relational framework on literary terms.

Postcolonial National Consciousness and the Limits of Eurocentrism in “The Fortunate Traveller” and “The Season of Phantasmal Peace”

In this section, I focus on the final poems of Derek Walcott’s 1981 collection *The Fortunate Traveller*, namely “The Fortunate Traveller” and “The Season of Phantasmal Peace.” I challenge the conventional readings of these poems as expressing, on one hand, Walcott’s own transnational experiences as he travels through Europe and North America, and, on the other hand, Walcott’s ethical appeal to the rich but corrupt First World countries to learn from the poor but compassionate Third World peoples. Such readings, I argue, take for granted that Walcott and his speaker both occupy a transnational subject position, and do not take into account the poems’ literary and affective turns. The moving, lyrical language of “Season” responds to the exhaustion and inevitable tragedy of “The Fortunate Traveller.” The two poems represent national consciousness as a framework for liberation and mutual cooperation, a discursive promise that must be relational and not premised on already formed collective and individual subjectivities or identities.

At first glance, this collection appears to be even more transnational and migrant

in theme than the previous *Sea Grapes* (1976) and *Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), as Walcott intersperses short lyric and narrative poems about North America and Europe with pieces about Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, the poetic speaker of “The Fortunate Traveller” is a “Sussex don” (“Fortunate Traveller” 459), a scholar of Jacobean tragedy and a functionary of the World Bank who betrays the trust of a developing nation and faces (at the end of the poem) imminent death at the hands of that nation’s agents. Paula Burnett’s study of the “The Fortunate Traveller” and “The Season of Phantasmal Peace” is an example of a biographical interpretation that relies heavily on Walcott’s own movements across various countries during the 1980s. However, while providing an insightful and exhaustive study of the literary and historical sources that Walcott refers to in his poems, Burnett’s essay rests on two assumptions. The first is that the Sussex don’s voice collapses into Walcott’s own speaking voice, such that “the poet in describing his tussle with his own conscience is reaching out directly to the reader. The reader by definition is one of the privileged who is being invited to consider his or her complicity with the unjust world order, in step with the poet” (Burnett 177). This conflation of the poetic speaker with a conscientious and peregrinating Walcott leads to Burnett’s second assumption, that the poem “appeals to the privileged to reform themselves and the world over which they wield power — in other words, it directs them to redemption rather than damnation” (177). Against the First World speaker of the poem, Burnett poses “the other abiding figure” that is “the good people of the South, who, despite their material poverty, are rich in the things that matter most and can teach the mean-spirited and tragedy-oriented North about the value of faith, hope, and love” (207). The difficulty here is that in order to read the poem as a redemptive critique of global injustice, one must hold to a vision of postcolonial countries and peoples as

innately noble and pristinely compassionate, “rich in the things that matter most,” but this is a vision that runs dangerously close to the essentializing and exploitative perspective of the privileged Sussex don whom Burnett is criticizing. Furthermore, by positioning “the mean-spirited and tragedy-oriented North” against the “good people of the South,” Burnett’s reading reinforces a binary opposition of the West versus the Rest that Walcott is working through and trying to undo in both his critical essays and poetry.

I argue instead that “The Fortunate Traveller” examines how Walcott’s poem casts Eurcentric religious beliefs and historical reality into the familiar literary and dramatic genre of tragedy. The poem inhabits and shows how a worldview centered upon Europe moves inexorably towards a deadly confrontation between Europe and the rest of the world through the literary and formal logic of tragedy invoked by the first-person narration of the Sussex don who specializes in the field of Jacobean tragedy. But “The Fortunate Traveller” does more than provincialize Europe (to borrow Dipesh Chakrabarty’s phrase). By highlighting the limitations and the exhaustion of Eurocentric religious, historical, and literary perspectives, the poem questions if another framework of human relationships exists, a question that “The Season of Phantasmal Peace” answers in an intransitive manner that does not assume a direct object nor a substantive subject of narration. Another way of phrasing my reading would be to recall Simon Gikandi’s assessment of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, in which Gikandi considers how the strength of Rushdie’s novel “lies in its jettisoning of even such alternative (postcolonial) terms as *migrancy* and *hybridity*” (*Englishness* 213, original emphasis). “The Fortunate Traveller” and its companion piece “The Season of Phantasmal Peace” jettison the migrant and transnational claims that have been made on them. Instead, these two

poems refuse the identitarian concepts of migrancy and hybridity and conceive a national consciousness that is itself premised on a global, international awareness. This conceptualization is distinctively literary: "The Fortunate Traveler" works through and shows the limits of literary and historical discourses that are both Eurocentric and transnational, and "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" evokes an international and relational consciousness through affective and lyrical language and mood.

In the very first canto of the poem, Europe is cast as both the political and the religious center of the Sussex don's world, but it is a center characterized as unwholesome and moribund: "Steeple, spires / congealed like holy candles. Rotting snow / flaked from Europe's ceiling" (I, 1-2). In these two lines, the whole of Europe becomes a decrepit cathedral with "rotting snow / flak[ing]" from its vast "ceiling," while its buildings, those "steeples, spires," are disgustingly "congealed" into religious paraphernalia, as votive "holy candles." Instead of veneration, the Christian religion that incarnates itself in the physical form of Europe bears an overwhelming sense of corruption and decay. The religious register transforms into a political one when the Sussex don appears:

In the square coffin manacled to my wrist:
small countries pleaded through the mesh of graphs,
in treble-spaced, Xeroxed forms to the World Bank
on which I had scrawled the one word, MERCY; (I, 6-10)

Here, Europe is seen as the ground for a global political institution like "the World Bank," whose formal and formulaic bureaucracy can be seen in how "small countries" submit their reports in precise, "treble-spaced, Xeroxed forms." Such bureaucracy obstructs, rather than enables aid, for the small countries sound like prisoners "plead[ing]" for mercy through the visual and physical barrier created by the

synesthesia of “the mesh of graphs.” The single “scrawled” word “MERCY” on all the forms highlights a dreadful complacency in the Sussex don: he refuses to regard the particularities of each document and considers that one simply-worded solution (“MERCY”) can serve as panacea for all the troubles of these small countries. In the second stanza, the Sussex don’s reply to the developing country’s representatives also plays on the sense of “the one word”: “‘Then we can depend on you to get us those tractors?’” / “‘I gave my word’” (I, 20-21). The Sussex don means “word” as a promise, but we have already seen him scrawl “the one word” on the developing country’s documents. Thus, what the Sussex don gives the country’s representatives is his ironic version of “MERCY,” ironic because it is not at all divine forgiveness in the Christian register, but a political perversion of mercy into betrayal. This perversion of Christian grace into calculated betrayal is emphasized by his description of the Severn River (on which he is travelling to Bristol to receive payment) as flashing pieces of silver, “Iscariot’s salary,” with the traitor Judas himself as the “patron saint of spies” (I, 93-94). Given the decaying and corrupt state of Europe and its religious armature, the first canto of the poem foreshadows that the Sussex don’s intervention and assistance will lead to failure and doom, entombing both Europe and the developing nations in the “square coffin” of his briefcase.

This failure and doom stems from the Sussex don’s view of world affairs and world history as centered around Europe, with Europe as the primary subject. “[D]esperately researching / the origins of history” (I, 69-70), and “seeking in all races a common ingenuity” (I, 74), he finds, instead of human origins, “pity” (I, 69). His “pity” is objectified in a romanticized image of prehistoric Africa: “I envisaged an Africa flooded with such light / as alchemized the first fields of emmer wheat and barley /

when we savages dyed our pale dead with ochre" (I, 75-77). On one hand, his vision of Africa appears salutary and beneficent, for the land is "flooded with such light" and life that produces a bounty of "emmer wheat and barley." On the other hand, the human activity represented here is a funerary rite of death, and the Eurocentric slant on this romantic vision is evident from the use of the word "savages." Even though he prefixes this bestial and primitive term with an ecumenical "we," the inclusiveness of the pronoun appears strained and unable to fill in the slippage between the bountiful land and its bestial inhabitants. This slippage can be explained by the last two lines of the stanza that reveal the true intent of his pity: "I sowed the Sahara with rippling cereals / my charity fertilized these aridities" (I, 81-82). The terms "sowed" and "fertilized" suggest not only an horticultural but more importantly a reproductive register. Here, the prehistoric African savages have disappeared, and it is the Sussex don's pity and "charity" that inseminates Africa. Despite his claim that he is "seeking a common human ingenuity" in his research, the Sussex don is not interested in Africa for its humans. Rather, the only ingenuity that he finds is his own imagined virility to sow and fertilize the barren and empty soil of Africa. The Sussex don participates in an "imperial fiction" (II, 18) in which Europe is the protagonist who seeks new frontiers to sow and fertilize in order to exert power and dispense charity upon the world. Moreover, the Sussex don appears to be aware of his complicity with these imperial images: he is inhabiting and acting out a fiction and is powerless to halt its implacable progression.

It is this imperial fiction that Walcott's poem increasingly emphasizes as the poem develops, for European religious and historical knowledge are represented via literary devices and allusions as inexorably tragic. Immediately after his vision of a romanticized, prehistoric Africa, the Sussex don describes his scholarly area of expertise:

What was my field? Late sixteenth century.
 My field was a dank acre. A Sussex don,
 I taught the Jacobean anxieties: *The White Devil*.
 Flamineo's torch startles the brooding yews.
 The drawn end comes in strides. I loved my Duchess,
 the white flame of her soul blown out between
 the smoking cypresses. [...] (I, 83-89)

The significance of this passage is twofold. First, the "dank acre" of sixteenth-century English literature is set in contrast to the vision of "an Africa flooded with such light" and "fertilized" by the Sussex don's "charity" in the previous stanza. A rotting, dank, and decaying Europe is metonymically represented here through the darkness and intrigue of Jacobean drama, further emphasizing the dichotomy between the "old" world of Europe and the "new" world of Africa and other developing nations. Second, the Sussex don's fascination with Flamineo and the Duchess of Malfi suggests that his own elaborate intrigue will meet a similar fate as theirs. These are two characters from "the Jacobean anxieties" of John Webster, respectively *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Both Flamineo and the Duchess are involved in courtly intrigues and elaborate schemes of political or romantic interest, and both are killed as their schemes fail in terrible, macabre ways. Their fates are characterized as inevitable and swift by the Sussex don in his summary sentence, "the drawn end comes in strides." His sense of their death as inevitable parallels what he feels as he faces imminent death at the end of the poem. In the final canto, before receiving news that the developing nation's agents have tracked him down, he echoes with chillier overtones his earlier phrase: "The drawn sword comes in strides" (IV, 1). The compositional sense of "drawn," the steady pace of movement of "strides", and the Sussex don's prescience of his impending downfall suggest that his personal fate is held in the thrall of the formal workings of European literary and dramatic tragedy. Whether he identifies more with the calculating Flamineo

or the pure-hearted Duchess is not the issue here. Rather, because the Sussex don sees himself in both the diabolical Flamineo and the angelic Duchess, both the exploitative impulse to know, desire, and conquer lands like Africa on one hand, and the beneficent intention to culture and cultivate pristine aridities on the other are shown to be misinformed. They are misinformed because they are centered on a European subject, leading ultimately to a tragic end for all involved.

Paula Burnett's observation that Walcott's poem "quite deliberately constructs its meanings in and through the context of literary tradition" (176) is correct in light of the tragic narrative that informs the poem. However, her evaluation of the poem as "the Third World's 'J'accuse' addressed to the affluent, an angry cry on behalf of the world's starving" that "it inverts the dynamic of cultural colonialism, addressing itself, as mission, to the "soul" of its others, the neoimperialists, hoping to effect a moral transformation" (177) misses the point of poem's own tragic structure. The problem with this reading is that "the Third World" Burnett claims as the speaking subject of the poem's accusing address does *not* speak. The starving peoples of the world are barely represented in the poem, and when they do appear, they are cast as stereotypes of the Sussex don's colonial imagination. In Europe they are shady immigrants whose "black skins [have] gone grey" (I, 13) and who speak "the stilted French / of their dark river" (I, 16-17); in Africa they are the savages who "dyed [their] pale dead with ochre" (I, 77); in the Caribbean they become "backward tribes" who "keep vigil of [God's] Body" (III, 14) in their "blissful ignorance" that "God is dead" (III, 16). In other words, The Third World comes across as inauthentic ('stilted French), native ("dyed our pale dead with ochre"), and naive ("blissful ignorance"). No moral transformation of the neoimperialist West can be possible on these terms, for what we see is the impossibility of

transformation while the dominant worldview (in this case, the Sussex don's) is locked into a distinctively European and Eurocentric religious, historical, and literary narrative. To illustrate this, I turn to the poem's most arresting passage that comes at the end of canto II, where the Sussex don's meditation on religion, history, and literature reaches a thematic and formal climax.

Through Kurtz's teeth, white skull in elephant grass,
the imperial fiction sings. Sunday
wrinkled downriver from the Heart of Darkness.
The heart of darkness is not Africa.
The heart of darkness is the core of fire
in the white center of the holocaust.
The heart of darkness is the rubber claw
selecting a scalpel in antiseptic light,
the hills of children's shoes outside the chimneys,
the tinkling nickel instruments on the white altar; (II, 18-27)

The central trope of this passage as an appropriation and redefinition of that famous Conradian image, "the Heart of Darkness." It first confirms its imperial provenance "through Kurtz's teeth," then changes the referent of that "imperial fiction to "not Africa," but rather Europe. The declarative sentences in the middle of the passage drive home this forceful redefinition with the repetition of the phrase "the heart of darkness" and their stark, subject-verb-object syntactical structure. These lines also include echoes of earlier images with regard to Europe's religion, literature, and colonizing imagination, implying the complicity of these narratives with the tragedy of genocide. The "white flame" of the Duchess of Malfi's noble soul turns into the "core of fire" and "the white center" of the holocaust, a possible reference to the huge furnaces where bodies were cremated *en masse*. The light that flooded Africa with a bountiful harvest becomes an "antiseptic light" in which surgical procedures are carried out on hapless victims. Finally, the Christian armature that the poem earlier associates with Europe

itself is manifest in the “white altar” upon which “tinkling nickel” instruments of pain and death are proffered. By giving us vivid descriptions of the holocaust that stem from “Kurtz’s teeth,” Walcott’s poem rhetorically conjoins European imperialism and European genocide, implying that the same “imperial fiction” and logic that produces Kurtz and “the Heart of Darkness” also produces “the white center of the holocaust” as the other side of same coin.

Some commentators suggest that passage affirms how the Holocaust is a “modeling of holy terror” and divine retribution for Europe’s colonial conquest, and that Europe is “the northern world of pathological power” as opposed to places such like Africa and the Caribbean “where cultures are based on the affirmation of life rather than death, and where ways of communal living have been developed, based on respect rather than competition” (Burnett 179). But Walcott’s poem turns way from such Manichean binaries, for to ascribe to such moral injunctions is to romanticize the postcolonial world while demonizing Europe, placing both outside of history and ignoring the mutually constitutive relationships between them. Walcott’s poem interrogates the very discourses that produce the oppositional categories of north versus south, of cultures of death and competition versus those of respect and affirmation.

Jacob, in his last card, sent me these verses:
 “Think of a God who doesn’t lose His sleep
 if trees burst into tears and glaciers weep.
 So, aping His indifference, I write now,
 not Anno Domini: After Dachau.” (II, 28-32)

The four lines written by the Sussex don’s acquaintance and Holocaust victim Jacob differ from the rest of the poem in that they are almost perfect heroic couplets, whereas the rest of the poem is in free verse. As a sententious form popularized in eighteenth-century English narrative and dramatic verse, the heroic couplet and is remarkable for

its self-contained pithiness and semantic closure. But while these four lines from Jacob evoke the form of the heroic couplet, they also deny its closure and challenge Europe's tragic sweep by enacting the dissolution of the speaking subject in history and literature. The first couplet begins with an imperative to think critically about a worldview centered upon God as a sovereign subject. God's apathy contrasts with immense human suffering, but this suffering is represented through the lugubrious personification of trees and glaciers as part of a natural landscape. The personification here echoes the metonymic images of the concentration camps in "the rubber claw," the "hills of children's shoes" and "tinkling nickel instruments" earlier in the stanza. Both tropes avoid establishing humans or people with definite identities as subjects inflicting or receiving torture and degradation. Humans as subjects perish in the tragedy of the imperial fiction and the white center of the Holocaust, and what remains are things and objects that those who come after must apprehend and be responsible to. Hence the haunting second couplet that rewrites time itself from the divine, eternal present of "Anno Domini" (the year of our Lord) to the secular belatedness of "After Dachau." Furthermore, the slant rhyme of "Dachau" with "write now" contrasts with the perfect rhyme of "weep" and "sleep." This slippage, coming at the end of a quatrain that both echoes an established English literary form and projects a sweeping historical change, marks the limits of a history and literature centered on Europe and opens up the possibility of thinking in terms other than the Manichean oppositions that govern categories such as "the Heart of Darkness" and the "white center of the Holocaust." Both Jacob, who presumably dies in the camps after writing these lines, and the Sussex don, to whom these lines are addressed, cannot entertain this possibility because they are themselves creatures of these categories. Jacob can only ape the indifference of his

apathetic God before perishing, while the Sussex don self-consciously acts out the part of a traitorous villain in Jacobean tragedy. They cannot envision a world After Dachau even though they are aware that it is coming to pass. One may object that the transition from “Anno Domini” to “After Dachau” seems too glib and heedless of the reality of the Holocaust’s human disaster. But if we scan the line, we see that the colon between the two terms marks a caesura in the poetic rhythm. This pause marks an instant when the poem asks us to consider the implications of writing after the tragedies of imperialism and genocide. It arrests the semantic and rhythmic movement of the poem for a moment before alighting upon a term (“After Dachau”) that will be meaningless without the critical work demanded by that moment. This moment of thought that is formally enacted by “The Fortunate Traveller” will return in its companion poem, “The Season of Phantasmal Peace.” Therefore, “The Fortunate Traveller” as a work of art enacts Jacob’s imperative to think through and arrive at the limit of a tragic consciousness based on subjective and insular national, historical, and literary narratives, and paves the way for the lyrical vision to come in “The Season of Phantasmal Peace.”

Even though it is the final poem of *The Fortunate Traveller*, the opening of “The Season of Phantasmal Peace” marks it rhetorically as a continuation of the “The Fortunate Traveller.”

Then all the nations of birds lifted together
the huge net of the shadows of this earth
in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues,
stitching and crossing it. (1-4)

The adverb “Then” that begins the poem signals the temporal succession of this poem to “The Fortunate Traveller.” It is, I argue, an unfolding of that caesura in the colon between Anno Domini and After Dachau, for we move out of the Sussex don’s

jaundiced worldview and imperial fiction into the stylized and lyrical connections made through the literary figure of birds from “all the nations.” The birds in this poem recall their earlier appearance in “The Fortunate Traveller” as the Sussex don flees England for the Caribbean:

England recedes. The forked white gull
screeches, circling back.
Even the birds are pulled back by their orbit,
even mercy has its magnetic field. (I, 99-102)

In the earlier poem, the birds are unable to escape “the magnetic field” of the Sussex don’s “mercy,” and that mercy turns out to be a tragically duplicitous and self-serving pity. Like the Sussex don, the birds are held in the thrall of the imperial fiction that propels him towards the tragic confrontation with the Third World. With the passing of that poetic speaker, the birds now lift the shadows cast by that constricting Eurocentric worldview through the concerted effort of communication and relation: the mournful screech of the lone “forked white gull” in “The Fortunate Traveller” now becomes a convivial chatter of “multiudinous dialects, twittering tongues” that are “stitching and crossing” the net of shadows as it is being lifted off the earth.

Yet the poem takes on a surreal turn as the first stanza progresses: the birds’ cries, along with the rising net of shadows, become “soundless,” until

there was no longer dusk, or season, or decline, or weather,
only this passage of phantasmal light
that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever. (9-11)

Here, Walcott’s poem parallels Adorno’s idea of the text as a spider’s web that traps and crystallizes the matter of lived experience in its structure, and of the artwork as an object of negation rather than positivistic identification. What is being described in these three lines is the process of the birds’ lifting of the shadowy net, not the net itself nor the

shadows. It is worth recalling Adorno's words from *Minima Moralia* about the process of thought as it unfolds through the artwork: "Where thought has opened up one cell of reality, it should, without violence by the subject, penetrate the next. It proves its relation to the object as soon as other objects crystallize around it. In the light that it casts on its chosen substance, others begin to glow" (87). Read in Adornian terms, the "passage of phantasmal light" that heralds "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" marks the poem as an artwork opening up the tragic confrontation of nationalisms in "The Fortunate Traveller" into a relational and liberating exchange. "All the nations" are represented through multitudinous dialects and twittering tongues rather than the monologic narration of the Sussex don's Jacobean anxieties. This opening up occurs through two negations. First, there is an emphatic negation of time and nature, such that "there was no longer dusk, or season, decline, or weather," and "not the narrowest shadow" can sever its crystallization. Second, the diction of this first stanza thwarts any attempt to find a substantive referent for "this passage of phantasmal light": the subject of the sentence is neither the birds nor the net, but the passing of the shadowy net and the poem itself as a *passage* of lines and words. The first stanza of this poem takes us away from the magnetic orbit and tragic narrative that governs "The Fortunate Traveller," and introduces a different, relational literary logic that crystallizes objects around the artwork into a constellation rather than a subject-object duality.

The poem's crystallization can be seen in the second stanza, where the birds are

bearing the net higher, covering this world
like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing
the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes
of a child fluttering to sleep; (16-19)

The net, originally made of the shadows that haunted the world, now becomes a

structure that protects it. The phantasmal light of the first stanza is gradually gaining substance, just as Adorno suggests that thought, unfolding through the artwork, casts light upon one objective reality and in doing so illuminates others in its vicinity. The poem at this point draws on the various ideas of poetic creation developed in earlier verses. For example, the network of vines here recalls Shabine's analogy of poetic creation as the rigging of a ship in "The Schooner Flight": "I go draw and knot every line as tight / as ropes in this rigging" (Canto I, 173-174). The "trembling gauze" that covers the a child's eyes echoes the world sleeping like a child "on the trembling shoulders of Atlas" and "the toil that is balance" to hold the slumbering child in place (40-43). "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" takes both these analogies of poetic work and transforms Shabine's solitary labor and Atlas's punitive toil into a horticultural and maternal force that protects and nurtures.

In the third and final stanza, we see that this protective force unfolded by the poem's thinking is of a different nature than the self-aggrandizing pity that the Sussex don has for the developing nations, for it is premised on negation rather than sentiment:

such an immense, soundless, and high concern
for the fields and cities where the birds belong,
except it was their seasonal passing, Love,
made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses (24-29)

At first, the appearance of "Love" here seems patronizing and indulgent, as if the birds were dispensing such love from their "high privilege." But the subject of this sentence is the "concern" that the birds express rather than the birds themselves, and this love is "made seasonless." This negation cancels out the seasonal framework established in "The Fortunate Traveller," a poem that begins in a decaying European winter. The

second half of this passage introduces another gloss on the birds' concern: it is "something brighter than pity for the wingless ones." In the adjective "brighter," we see echoes of Adorno's idea of critical thought illuminating objective realities through the artwork. What is illuminated is a transcendence of the Sussex don's Eurocentric and patronizing pity discovered in his scholarly research and expressed in his vision of an uninhabited Africa inseminated by his own will to power. Instead, the concern here is one that conjoins the objective realities alluded to within the poem to the poem's own relational work. The birds are concerned not only with "the wingless ones who shared dark holes in windows and houses," but they recognize that these people also inhabit "the fields and cities where the birds belong." The humans are embedded in the very spaces that the birds belong to, and if we recall the opening line of the poem, these original spaces are the "nations" of the world. Therefore, "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" performs an immanent critique by lifting up the shadows of global division from "The Fortunate Traveller." Through its own literary devices and artistic elaboration, the poem reconfigures these shadows into a relational network of dialects, tongues, fields, cities, windows, and houses that make up the various nations that it sets up as a frame. By aestheticizing nationalism, by turning a political and historical concept into a trope for a lyric poem, "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" itself becomes that passage of phantasmal light in both senses of the word "passage." It is thus a circumnational moment: an instant in time that crystallizes the historical processes at work within it and projects a force field connecting those elements within its structure. First, in a spatial sense, the poem itself is a passage of words and lines, but the poem's reach extends globally, "covering this world / like the vines of an orchard." Second, in the temporal sense, it is an elaboration of the caesura between Anno Domini and After Dachau we

saw in "The Fortunate Traveller." This elaboration suggests that a relational framework beyond the imperial fiction and Eurocentric mercy towards the other nations of the world is needed After Dachau, and the poem itself is a proposition at the literary level of such a framework. The task of setting up this relational framework will require different skills and tools on various political, social, and artistic levels.

Such a relational framework is what Theodor Adorno has in mind when he makes his infamous comment that "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" ("Cultural Criticism" 210). Whether as a descriptive or a normative statement, Adorno's pronouncement has been read and denounced as an inappropriate foreclosing of meaningful artistic utterance after the Holocaust. But we should recall that Adorno's aphorism is an afterthought to his concluding discussion of the necessity of immanent criticism in "the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism," where "critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge [of absolute reification that is on the verge of absorbing the mind] as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation" ("Cultural Criticism" 210). Adorno envisions poetry after Auschwitz, After Dachau, as part of the critical intelligence that must mediate the dialectic of culture and barbarism, as an aspect of this intelligence that mediates precisely by crystallizing the objective forces of history within its literary form. Paul Gilroy evokes Adorno's comments on art after Auschwitz to elucidate what he calls the "politics of fulfilment and the politics of transfiguration" in "the vernacular cultures of the black Atlantic diaspora" and stresses how the latter form of politics "strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unrepresentable" (38). Gilroy extends this Adornian paradox to the work of African American writers and argues that "even when these writers are black Americans their work should not be exclusively assimilated to the project of

building an ethnically particular or nationalist cultural canon, because the logic of the great political movement in which these texts stand and to which they contribute operates at other levels than those marked by national boundaries" (218).

Gilroy is correct in arguing against assimilating art to one particular identity or canon (a move that resonates with Adorno's warning against self-satisfied contemplation), but I suggest that rethinking nationalism as a negotiation between politics and culture rather than ethnic particularity or cultural identity (as I have demonstrated in my first chapter) allows us to better appreciate how art produces and reveals the relationship between (to use Gilroy's terms) "the levels marked by national boundaries" and "the logic the great political movement" of black Atlantic counterculture. Gilroy's own opposition of nationalism and "the web of diaspora identities and concerns" (218) in literary texts runs the risk of objectifying both terms into stable entities — or, to use the terms in which Adorno discusses poetry and dialectics, the nation becomes associated with barbarism and diaspora gets linked with culture, with the balance shifting in favor of the latter linkage as both a normative and an evaluative category. In contrast, Walcott's poetry is a form of cultural criticism that goes one step further than Gilroy's by negating the opposition between barbarism and culture, by interrogating nationalism within a transnational framework rather than valorizing diasporic culture over nationalism. He does this not by recuperating culture or diaspora through an erasure or subordination of the barbaric or the national, but by evoking poetic figures and tropes that represent the contradictions and self-satisfied contemplation of nationalism, and in so doing he calls our attention to the persistence of nationalism as a liberating and utopian consciousness. Walcott's poetry keeps us "mindful of the duality of the moments [of national consciousness and transnational

culture]. It must relate the knowledge of society as a totality and of the mind's involvement in it to the claims inherent in the specific content of the object that it be apprehended as such" (Adorno, "Cultural Criticism" 209). In "The Fortunate Traveller," the Eurocentric totality of the Sussex don's mind, a global perspective filled with Jacobean anxieties and imperial fictions, slips into absolute reification. This tragic narrative is superseded in "The Season of Phantasmal Peace" by the motif of "all the nations of birds [who] lifted together / the huge net of the shadows of this earth" (1-2), a utopic but nonetheless arresting aesthetic figure of nationalism as a relational and conjunctive force between politics and culture. This what Gilroy calls the politics of transfiguration, "in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unrepresentable" (38), but Walcott — *contra* Gilroy — evokes this transfiguration within the framework of a residual nationalism rather than a diasporic culture.

* * *

CHAPTER FOUR

“NOT MONOLOGICAL BUT MULTILOGICAL”: WOMEN’S BODIES AND TRANSNATIONAL WRITING IN SHIRLEY GEOK-LIN LIM'S ESSAYS AND FICTION

Introduction

In this chapter I examine some critical essays and a novel by Shirley Geok-lin Lim, who was born and grew up in the former British colonies of Malaysia and Singapore, and who is better known in the United States as an Asian American writer and critic teaching at the University of California Santa Barbara. Lim’s critical essays and her first novel, *Joss and Gold*, focus on women to discuss contemporary Malaysian and Singaporean socio-cultural issues. At the same time, Lim’s writing brings her experiences and reflections on being both a Southeast Asian and an Asian American woman and academic into contact with each other. As such, her writing is located at the intersection of three discursive fields: postcolonialism, Southeast Asian nationalism, and Asian American culture and literature. By working through these three discursive fields, Lim illustrates a residual nationalism by critiquing what Rey Chow calls “coercive mimeticism” (*Protestant Ethnic* 107) in Malaysia and Singapore as a form of absolute or determinate national identity. Lim foregrounds the materiality of women’s physical selves and the reproduction of mixed-race children as a challenge this coercive mimeticism, “a process in which” those who have been marked as marginal or different in both Western and colonial societies “are expected to objectify themselves in accordance with the already seen and thus to authenticate the familiar imaginings of them as ethnics” (Chow, *Protestant Ethnic* 107). The official national narratives of Malaysia and Singapore take up the symbolic and economic divisions created by British

colonialism in order to determine their postcolonial national identities in terms of racial and linguistic purity¹.

I argue that Lim's writings intervene in Malaysia's and Singapore's postcolonial nationalist narratives, narratives that are often centered on a heroic masculine subject. Lim does this by drawing on literary strategies of Asian American women writers. In this sense, her work demonstrates a residual nationalism: having migrated to the USA, Lim is aware of the transnational cultural flows between Asia and America, but her appropriation of important Asian American women's literary strategies is framed within a postcolonial Malaysian and Singaporean context. Such strategies include but are not limited to: the claiming of a female authorial figure, the recasting of immigrant narratives into a mother-daughter romance, and the critique of Asian cultural nationalism often linked to masculine figures. In Lim's novel *Joss and Gold*, the female protagonist's consciousness of her physical body, sexuality, and reproductive capacity are in tension with the dominant postcolonial and national narratives that focus on the foundational role of men in the process of Southeast Asian nation-building. By emphasizing the materiality of women's bodies and their desires, Lim represents her female protagonist Li An and her hybrid, cross-cultural daughter Suyin as contrapuntal figures to the masculine nationalist imagination. This nationalist imagination responds to the history of British colonialism and contemporary American hegemony by extolling a concept of multiculturalism in which races and cultures are considered equal but must be kept separate and pure.

Li An and Suyin in Lim's *Joss and Gold* challenge this dominant, state-sponsored

¹ For a thorough analysis of the economic divisions created by the British along racial lines between Malays and Chinese in colonial Malaya, see Alatas (1977).

heterogeneity by pushing the postcolonial and national logic of multiculturalism to its limit and by respectively bearing and being women of mixed races and hybrid cultural heritage. Whereas a male-oriented approach to postcolonial and national subjectivity often represents women and their bodies as symbols to clearly demarcate the cultural boundaries between Asians and Westerners as well as Chinese, Indians, and Malays within the national body, Lim imagines a community within the social and political framework of the Singaporean nation where women can affirm an agency of their own, one that is not determined by the cultural symbolism of postcolonial nationalism. In order to do so, Lim adapts certain features of Asian American literature by women writers such as Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. At the same time, Lim's appropriation of these American literary tropes also contributes to the emerging discourse of transnational Asian American literature. By this I mean that Lim's novel challenges the ethnographic gaze that is often used to view writing from and about other geographical regions, particularly Asia. This ethnographic gaze is exemplified in the novel by one of its main characters, the American Peace Corps volunteer and anthropologist, Chester Brookfield. Lim reconfigures the dialectic between America and Asia, male and female, nation and culture, such that the first term in each pair neither subsumes nor subordinates the second term.

Women in Malaysian and Singaporean Official Multiculturalism

The subordination of one ethnic or racial group has been a problem for the social and economic policies of both Malaysian and Singaporean governments. After World War II and the gradual retreat of British colonial forces from Southeast Asia, Malaysia's population was "composed of 37 per cent Chinese, 11 per cent Indians and 2 per cent

others [Eurasians],” with the remaining 50 percent claiming Malay or indigenous (*bumiputra*, literally children of the soil) status (Mauzy 107). There are clear divisions between the Malay and non-Malay sectors of the population, as “the non-Malays are mostly non-Muslims, primarily urban, with significant numbers engaged in retail trade or in the professions” and “as an aggregate they are economically better off than the Malays” (Mauzy 107). The “widespread perception” among the Malay majority “that the Chinese have dominated the economy and, through various means, have inhibited Malay participation” (Mauzy 107) does not completely take into account that this ethnic and economic disparity — along with the concept of special rights for Malays and indigenous peoples — is primarily the result of British colonialism. As Diane Mauzy points out,

The non-Malays were brought to the country as “birds of passage” (“guest workers”) by British colonial authorities from the 1870s to the outbreak of the Second World War. To “protect” the Malays from being swamped by the more aggressive immigrants, the British, who ruled in collaboration with the Malay aristocracy, gave the Malays certain “special rights” involving government employment, education and land reserves. The preferential policies were also paternalistic, encouraging the Malay peasantry to maintain their traditional way of life. Hence, a dual economy developed: a European and non-Malay (and sometimes Malay aristocracy) modern urban economic sector, and a traditional rural Malay economy centring around rice population and fishing. (108)

The issues of Malay rights, Malay as the national language, and economic restructuring to encourage Malay participation and businesses came to a head in the May 1969 elections, which are a pivotal event in the first section of Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s novel. These riots between Malays and non-Malays involved “arson, hundreds of gruesome deaths and thousands of injuries, temporary chaos, a state of emergency declared and order restored by the Royal Malay Regiment of the army” (Mauzy 110). In its aftermath, “the fiction of a government of nearly equal ethnic partners was no longer maintained. It

could be clearly seen that the Malays were the hegemonic power, and intended to remain so at any cost for the foreseeable future" (111).

In contrast to Malay hegemony in Malaysia, Singapore's multiracial policy advocates an egalitarian approach, but there are distinctively Chinese overtones to its idea of shared Asian values forming a national ethos. Multiracialism, as it is known and implemented in Singapore, differs crucially from multiculturalism in the USA. Whereas the latter is seen as "a means for 'empowering' minority ethnic and other groups," the former is "a means of disempowerment because it erases the grounds upon which a racial group may make claims on behalf of its own interests without ostensibly violating the idea of group equality that is the foundation of multiracialism itself" (Chua 36). Since its creation as a major trading port in 1819 by the East India Company, Singapore has attracted many immigrants from East Asia and South Asia. In 1963 it joined the Federation of Malaysia, but became independent in 1965 after racial and political conflicts arose. Singapore's population is exceptional because Malay Muslims — who make up the dominant majority in neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia — are a minority in the city-state, which has a majority of ethnic Chinese. Along with an even smaller minority of ethnic Indians from South Asia, the heterogeneous nature of Singapore's population requires an official, state-driven policy of multiracialism and meritocracy. To administer the management of a racially diverse population, four component racial categories were introduced: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others (Eurasians). Partly because of these categories, "Singaporeans were impelled to strengthen their cultural attachments to one or the other" despite their own sub-ethnic distinctions (Brown 83). This maneuver, intended by the Singapore government to depoliticize ethnicity, "pushes race out of the front-line of politics while according it

high visibility in the cultural sphere” (Chua 36). Ideologically, a set of five “Shared Values” was promulgated in 1991; however, these values are a version of neo-Confucian ethics, a form of “ ‘Chineseness’ [that] could be depicted as a central building block out of which the consensual national identity was being created” (Brown 93). The numerical and socio-economic dominance of the Chinese in Singapore ensured that their culture – as defined by the government – was first among equals in this new conception of Asian values and national identity.

This discourse of shared Asian values, however, has marginalized the role of women in Singaporean society and politics. As Nirmala Puroshotam argues, “it is up to a particularly male-based polity to decide upon the quality of a woman’s life. The power women enjoy is but a shadow, a mirroring of power, that radiates from particular loci – coalesced under the label of a mostly male “government” and ruling political party (the People’s Action Party or PAP)” (329). Even as women in Singapore joined the workforce in increasing numbers and attained higher levels of education after national independence in 1965, the state continually regarded their primary responsibility as homemakers and child-bearers:

The call in the late eighties for women to mind their familial responsibilities, and to make more babies, especially if they are better educated and so – as the argument goes – could produce cleverer babies, is similarly couched. [...] The concern has never been with how the nation can save women from the fetters of social, cultural, political, and economic discrimination and exploitation. The concern has been and remains how women can best serve ‘the nation’ – an abstraction mostly generated according to male relevances” (Puroshotam 335)

Puroshotam’s argument demonstrates that the Singaporean state’s positioning of women within its nation-building concepts of ethnic management for economic development can be read within a larger postcolonial context. As Deniz Kandiyoti

points out:

on the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as 'national' actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse. (380)

Furthermore, Kandiyoti stresses how this nationalist discourse positions women on both symbolic and material levels as servants of the nation. Because women are regarded as "the custodians of cultural particularisms by virtue of being less assimilated, both culturally and linguistically, into the wider society," their responsibility is to "reproduce their culture through the continued use of their native language, the persistence of culinary and other habits and the socialisation of the young" (Kandiyoti 382). Following this logic, there are explicit as well as unspoken "regulations concerning who a woman can marry and the legal status of her offspring [that] aim at reproducing the boundaries of the symbolic identity of their group" (Kandiyoti 382).

This symbolic identity, formed out of the cultural and corporeal disciplinary formations of both Malaysian and Singaporean official nationalism, serve both the postcolonial nationalist project as well as the needs of global capital. Especially in Singapore, the state places a premium on population growth in order to develop human resources for economic growth, and this emphasis is summed up in Nirmala Purushotam's observation that Singaporean women with postsecondary education are encouraged to give birth to "cleverer babies" (335) to strengthen the workforce. Singaporean women are thus important symbolic figures and boundary markers in a national drama that can be understood as a heroic struggle for survival. The nation-state's independence from British colonial rule and its subsequent ejection from the

Malaysian Federation in 1965 are indeed cast in terms of a heroic, masculine narrative. We need look no further than the autobiography of Singapore's first Prime Minister, Kuan Yew Lee, entitled *The Singapore Story*. Lee depicts his leadership of Singapore, which was part of the Federation of Malaysia from 1963-1965, as a heroic struggle to build an egalitarian and "truly multiracial" society, what he calls "a 'Malaysian Malaysia, not a Malay Malaysia'" that would represent all the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Eurasian constituencies in the country (17). In this struggle, he faces the implacable foe of "Malay hegemony" as Malaysian politics "was dominated by [Malaysia's Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman] United Malay National Organisation (UMNO)" (17). Lee thinks of Singapore's separation from Malaysia as a personal catastrophe, a failure to keep his word to his followers: "By accepting separation, I had failed them. That sense of guilt made me break down. It was my moment of anguish. The deed was done, but I was overwrought at the thought of all the shattered hopes of millions we had aroused" (649-651). Furthermore, this separation of "a Chinese island in a Malay sea" (23) from the Malaysian Federation is reckoned in terms of a failed marriage:

Under Malay-Muslim custom, a husband, but not the wife, can declare "*Talak*" (I divorce thee) and the woman is divorced. They can reconcile and he can remarry her, but not after he has said "*Talak*" three times. The three readings in the two chambers of parliament were the three *talaks* with which Malaysia divorced Singapore. The partners — predominantly Malay in Malaya, predominantly Chinese in Singapore — had not been compatible. Their union had been marred by increasing conjugal strife over whether the new Federation should be a truly multiracial society, or one dominated by the Malays. (14)

The gendered terms of this description are significant because they cast Chinese-dominated Singapore as a wife who suffers unfairly at the hands of a fickle husband — predominantly Malay Malaysia. Lee's comparison of the Malaysia-Singapore separation to "a Malay-Muslim" divorce custom evokes stereotypes of Malay and Muslim culture

as polygamous and misogynist (while sidestepping the possibilities that these qualities might also be present in traditional Chinese culture), thus implying that a Federation “dominated by the Malays” would regress into a state of cultural primitivism. The reader is meant to sympathize with a feminized Singapore spurned by a masculinized Malaysia who uses custom instead of reason and logic to throw out his wife. By feminizing Singapore in this political separation, Lee narrates Singapore’s later economic success and social stability (relative to Malaysia) are as both a matter of heroic masculinity overcoming anguished weakness and of his own personal triumph and moral integrity. The leaders of Singapore’s People’s Action Party “were not like the politicians in Malaya. Singapore ministers were not pleasure-loving, nor did they seek to enrich themselves,” Lee declares, as he recounts an anecdote about how he and another Singaporean colleague foiled a Malaysian attempt to compromise them at a club “where members and their friends could gamble at mahjong or poker, and where attractive call girls and even starlets were available” (656). At the end of his autobiography, Lee concludes that the story of Singapore is not only a collective experience in nation-building, but, more importantly, the narrative of his own life’s work and achievement: “the people [of Singapore] shared our feelings and were prepared to do whatever was needed to make an independent Singapore work. I did not know I was to spend the rest of my life getting Singapore not just to work but to prosper and to flourish” (663).

Asian American Women’s Writing and Multilogical Cultural Worlds

This heroic narrative of Singapore’s anti-colonial struggle, nation-building, and multiracial management can be understood in literary terms as a national *bildungsroman*. This narrative of growth and development is critiqued by Lim in her novel *Joss and Gold*;

she does so by appropriating literary strategies found in Asian American literature, particularly texts by women writers such as Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston. In her study of Asian American literature, Patricia P. Chu discusses how Asian American writers reconfigure the *bildungsroman* by “substituting authorship for marriage as a central trope for representing Asian American subject formation” (19). Chu argues that male Asian American writers replace the *bildungsroman*’s “well-married hero paradigm” with “the ‘immigrant romance,’ which recounts the protagonist’s search for a white partner to Americanize him or her; the abjection of the Asian mother; the construction of Asian Americans as artist-sons engaged in oedipal struggles; and the figuring of the Asian American women as sentimental heroes, brave immigrant foremothers, devoted daughters, and postmodernist authors” (19). But the representation of “Asian women in [Asian American] men’s texts” poses an additional problem that Asian American women writers must confront, for women “are used to represent aspects of the authors’ homeland or ancestral culture that are abjected from the male protagonists, the better to establish their Americanness,” hence “such texts implicitly construct Asian American subjectivity as masculine” (20). Here, we can see the parallels between Asian American masculine subject formation through literary discourse, and Singapore’s postcolonial narrative of heroic, patriarchal nation-building through state law and political autobiography.

Challenging this masculine subjectivity, Chu focuses on the work of Asian American women — Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Tripmaster Monkey* — to show how women represent Asian American women’s subjectivity on their own terms. In the case of Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*, the immigrant romance is cast in terms of a mother-daughter narrative. The mother stands

for “an inherited core of Chineseness, or of the Chinese feminine,” a core that the Chinese American daughter must integrate into “her American self” by containing this “radical difference” within a “narrative frame emphasizing the daughter’s psychological work and the sentimental story of the finding of the long-lost sisters” in China — thus demonstrating that the Chinese American daughter can “share with other Americans an enriching access to a matrilineal heritage of protofeminist individualism and enterprise” (Chu 168). Regarding Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Tripmaster Monkey*, Chu challenges the claim that Kingston misrepresents Chinese American history and culture by using surrealist techniques and postmodernist style, and argues that Kingston’s appropriation of the Chinese legend of the Monkey King (which her protagonist is using as source material for his own stage play) is a way of “affirming and exploring the power and resilience of the original [text] and reinscribing it into [Kingston’s] own American vision” (181). Chu further elaborates that Kingston’s “vision of Asian American culture as dialogic, inclusive, adaptive, and alive” is more salutary than both Frank Chin’s idea of a masculine, Chinese heroic tradition as well as Amy Tan’s evocation of “a classical Chinese past as a guarantor of present-day ethnic authenticity,” because “[Kingston’s] fidelity to the Chinese *American* past makes explicit the difficulty for her, as an American, of attempting to speak of Chinese history and subjectivity, categories she has generally presented as mediated for her by American culture and parental and community informants” (187, original emphasis). In short, Chu asserts that Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston are just as invested as Frank Chin and David Mura in claiming America for Asian Americans through literature, but they do so by representing Asian American women’s subjectivities as contrapuntal — but not contradictory — to their male counterparts.

In the same way, Shirley Geok-lin Lim appropriates the mother-daughter narratives and the dialogic, fragmentary revisioning of East Asian heroic legends and historical tales in order to claim Malaysia and Singapore by connecting their national imaginaries with Asian American literature, postcolonial critique, and feminist subjectivity. She inhabits and represents “cultural worlds” that are “not monological but multilogical” (Lim, “Asians in Anglo-American Feminism” 38), and Lim expresses such a relational, multilogical constellation by drawing on her own experiences growing up as an ethnic Chinese woman in Malaysia:

But as an already multiply colonized subject, I do not see these oppressions as coming from a hegemonic center. Instead, I see a colonial subject as the cultural site for the contradictions inherent in the intersections of multiply conserving circles of authority. These authoritarian domains overlap each other but not sufficiently so as to preserve the illusion of totalization. Ironically, therefore, I experienced those liberatory movements precisely *where* Confucianism, Catholicism, feudalism, and colonialism intersected. [...] it is not these systems but their intersections that offered me points of escape. Situated as I was in Confucianist, Malay feudal, Roman Catholic, British colonial crossways, I was exposed not to systematic political oppression but to continual upheavals. (“Anglo-American Feminism” 35-36, 37, original emphasis)

We can read Lim’s essays and her novel as “cultural site[s]” where “the contradictions inherent in the intersections of multiply conserving circles of authority” are exposed and critiqued, thus offering “points of escape” through literary reinscriptions of women’s bodies and sexuality along the lines of rhetorical tropes employed by Asian American women writers. The points of intersections and escape that Lim discusses, however, are not purely symbolic or semantic, because, as she argues in another essay, for the Asian woman writer, the act of writing is not only a political act but also a performance that engages her material self. Lim draws on the work of writers like Kamala Das, Ding Ling, and herself to make the claim that the woman writer in Asia has traditionally been

circumscribed within a male-dominated society, such that “her energies, which for writers are inscribed in writing, in the ‘graphic’ creations of self, must necessarily be dispersed or dispensed on material ‘creations’ – childbirth and childcare, the planting of gardens, preparation of meals, weaving and sewing of clothing,” and because of this, “her ‘bio’ must largely remain on the ground floor of experience. The semiotic presses on life as experience, the daily unfolding of smells, bustle, sensations, endless movement, those pressures of personalities on the self as receiver” (“Semiotics, Experience and the Material Self” 11). While it may seem as if Lim is creating a hierarchy where the self is merely a “receiver” or expression of the basic, irreducible experience of daily life, Lim stresses that the realization of this slippage is the beginning of political consciousness and artistic representation rather than a normative condition. As she avers, “when the Asian woman writer becomes conscious of her own subjectivity, she becomes conscious first of the fracture between her desire for the sensual world in which her being is grounded and the isolated signifying self which grasps the social oppression of the female but cannot overcome its internalized meaning (“Semiotics” 21). This apparent fracture between sensual desire and signifying self, between political subjectivity and domestic selfhood is a dichotomy resulting from male-oriented social norms that circumscribe women’s consciousness. Hence, in order to negate this apparent division, Lim holds that “the future of self for the Asian woman writer must lie in this vision [...] in which the material world emerges from its possession by males to the grasp of the woman” (24). Surprisingly, Lim finds her own literary style falls short of the standard of “political realism” (27) she feels is necessary for material grasp, for she remarks that she often writes “through a single lens spot-lighted on a single scene, a vision which lends itself to the short poem and short story but not the novel. It is also a

myopic vision, in which feeling is foregrounded" ("Semiotics" 24). I contend that Lim's style is hardly a myopic vision, nor does it fall short of some novelistic standard of political realism. *Joss and Gold* is Lim's first novel, and, as I will shortly discuss, some critics have expressed dissatisfaction with Lim's overwhelming use of details and descriptions, as well as with the lack of plot and character development in the last section of the novel. While this may appear to confirm Lim's own deprecation of her own prose, such a lack of readerly satisfaction should not automatically be construed as a failure.

If we consider Lim's discussion of overlapping and mutually destabilizing authoritarian domains in her first essay, as well as her argument about Asian women writers' material subjectivity in her second piece, we may understand *Joss and Gold* as an evocation of and extension of the traditional *bildungsroman* or Asian American immigrant romance through what Theodor Adorno calls the logic of the essay. In Adorno's words, the essay "thinks in fragments just as reality is fragmented and gains its unity only by moving through the fissures, rather than by smoothing them over" ("The Essay as Form" 104). Rather than tracing a form of radical opposition against the male-oriented narratives of nationalism in Malaysia and Singapore through her main character Li An, Lim's focus on Li An's myriad physical sensations and emotional struggles might be construed as an attempt to bring the logic of the poem, the short story, or the essay into play within the form of the novel. The style of the essay resembles Lim's description of her writing style that works through rather than resolves the fracture between sensuality and signification. But the unity of the essay is not an hermetic totality, just as Lim's literary vision is premised on fissures in "the illusion of totality" caused by "multiply conserving circles of authority" ("Anglo-American

Feminism" 35) rather than the creation of a diametrically oppositional discourse: "the essay, always directed towards artifacts, does not present itself as a creation; nor does it long for something all-embracing, the totality of which would resemble creation" (Adorno, "The Essay as Form" 105). Instead of creating an alternative, all-embracing totality to contest the gendered narratives of cultural nationalism, Lim's critical project in her essays and her novel is a strategic reconfiguration of race, culture, language, gender, and nationalism. Instead of nationalism being the teleological resolution of race, language, culture, and gender, all four elements are co-ordinated such that we can see how they relate to and affect one another, and that these relations are contingent and can be altered. This is what Adorno would call a "constellation" ("The Essay as Form" 105) that "co-ordinates elements, rather than subordinating them" ("The Essay as Form" 109), and we see this paralleled in Lim's conclusion that when the Asian woman writer recognizes "the material self" and "begin[s] to write politically," she becomes aware of "a sense of history and larger forces at work outside the subject" ("Semiotics" 25). What I am suggesting is that *Joss and Gold* may not be a novel at all in the sense of *bildungsroman* or Asian American immigrant romance; it may be more appropriate to call it a prose narrative that evokes aspects of its novelistic counterparts but works through the fragmentary, fissuring, and co-ordinating logic of the essay.

Lim's strategic reconfiguration or re-constellation of Malaysia's and Singapore's national narrative of growth and development can also be understood in light of Edward Said's distinguishing of nationality, nationalism, and nativism that I discussed in my first chapter (230). For Said, the first two terms denote political consciousness and cultural politics, respectively; the third term marks the consolidation of nationalism's liberating project into essentialist signs and symbols. Lim is rethinking this third form of

nationalism (as native identity) by interrogating how women are identified as caregivers loyal to the native group and custodians of cultural purity. By revealing the roles and positions that can be claimed by women within this masculine discourse, she performs an immanent critique of nationalism as a mode that identifies and objectifies women as cultural symbols and reproductive bodies. This mode of criticism is immanent because even as she interrogates women's symbolic and corporeal objectification, there is within her thinking a idea of the Singaporean nation as a critical form of political consciousness and cultural politics (Said's first and second senses of nationalism).

A Psychic Hinterland: Shirley Geok-lin Lim's *Joss and Gold*

Shirley Lim's *Joss and Gold* spans two time periods and three countries. Starting in Malaysia in the late 1960s, the novel follows Li An, a young Chinese Malaysian woman who studies and teaches British literature at the university in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city. Although Li An aspires to be a writer in America, she marries Henry Yeh, a Chinese Malaysian biochemist who asks her to stay in Malaysia with him. However, during the political and racial riots between ethnic Malays and Chinese in May 1969, Li An shares a night of passion with Chester Brookfield, an American Peace Corps volunteer whose brashness and idealistic enthusiasm attracts Li An. Chester returns to America after the riots, but Li An bears his child, a girl with green eyes and red hair whom she names Suyin. Henry divorces Li An, and she moves with her daughter to Singapore, living with her close friend Ellen and Henry's stepmother Mrs Yeh. The novel jumps to the 1980s, where Chester, now an anthropology professor in upstate New York, gets a vasectomy at the behest of his career-oriented American wife, Meryl, who works for the Parks Commission. Chester discovers from an old Malaysian friend

that he has a daughter by Li An, and goes to Singapore to look for her on the pretext of anthropological research. Meanwhile, Li An has become the editor of newsletter for an important biogenetics firm in Singapore, and grudgingly agrees to let Chester meet the twelve year-old Suyin. Mrs Yeh's sudden death leaves a substantial inheritance for Suyin, and Henry, as her executor, comes back into the picture, treating Suyin as his daughter. The narration begins to focus on Suyin's impressions of her life in an all-female household and the puzzling predicament of having two fathers from two different cultures and countries. Li An, who realizes that her daughter must find her own answers to this complicated situation, finally agrees to let Suyin visit Chester in America. The novel concludes with Li An listening to her daughter's breathing as she sleeps, evoking (in Li An's memory) Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo."

Critical reviews of *Joss and Gold* often regard the book as a "coming-of-age novel" that is "dominated by strong, independent, and goal-oriented women wrestling with individual development issues within the larger framework of a society also in transition" (Haggas 2087). The *Publishers Weekly* praises Lim for her "keen eye for the effects of American imperialism" and her "acute, realistic detail" but also faults her for providing so much detail such that the narrative becomes "burdensome" and requires "judicious editing" (52). Another reviewer remarks how "the plot wears thin toward the end and touches little on the relationship between Chester and Li An after their reunion. Instead, Lim brings Suyin to the forefront, keeping the story open for a possible sequel" (Quan 162). My point here is that most reviewers approach the novel from an ethnographic perspective, focusing on the effects of American imperialism on postcolonial societies and the problems of gender and race in Malaysia and Singapore.

However, the reviewers' dissatisfaction with certain plot and stylistic issues of Lim's novel suggests that the novel does not entirely fit the framework of the traditional realist *bildungsroman*, and that we may need to approach it from a different angle. *Joss and Gold*, certainly, begins as both a realistic coming-of-age narrative centered around Li An and a socio-political commentary about race, gender, and politics in Malaysia and Singapore – these two elements are never absent from the text. But, simultaneously, Lim's novel also draws on and enters a conversation with Asian American women's writing, for it uses the mother-daughter relationship and the rewriting of cultural nationalism (seen in Amy Tan's and Maxine Hong Kingston's novels) in order to critically confront the heroic masculinity of Singaporean nationalism. As Peter Nazareth astutely points out, there is a symbolic connection between Lim's novel and the memoirs of Singapore's first prime minister, Kuan Yew Lee: "The country has no hinterland, [Kuan Yew] Lee reiterates – and the writers know it consequently has no psychic hinterland, which they must create" (Nazareth 139). The "psychic hinterland," for Lim, turns out to be both Malaysian-Singaporean and Asian-American, for her novel, like Singapore itself, "reshapes the resources of a multinational world" (Nazareth 139). Lim's novel stages a multinational, trans-Pacific dialogue: if, in a novel by Amy Tan, the mother's essential Chineseness must be abjected in order for the daughter to claim Americanness, then in Lim's novel, it is not abjection but reproduction and miscegenation that is foregrounded through Li An's affair with the American Chester Brookfield and Suyin, her daughter who has both white American and Chinese Singaporean blood. Through Li An and her daughter Suyin, *Joss and Gold* contrasts characters of boundary-crossing impurity against the figures of "pure" Chineseness and Americanness constructed by both Singaporean and American national imaginaries.

Li An, as the protagonist of the novel, challenges the Chinese ideal of a mellow woman and dutiful wife both in her profession and her personality. As a student and then a tutor of English literature at the university in Kuala Lumpur, her relationship to language is embodied in the very materiality of her physical being rather than at an abstract, intellectual level. At the start of the novel, Li An prepares a prose passage from D. H. Lawrence for her seminar on practical criticism, where “she read it aloud, relishing the overflow of sibilants like spiced chickpeas in her mouth” (*Joss and Gold* 4, henceforth abbreviated *JG*). She spends her time sitting in the library “reading old copies of *Scrutiny* and copying fine phrases by F. R. Leavis, occasionally tearing off her sweater and running outside in the blazing sun to the back of the faculty lounge, where she bought sizzling flaky curry puffs and smoked two cigarettes in a row” (*JG* 4). Certainly, Li An’s emphasis on practical criticism and her choice of D. H. Lawrence for her students carry strong overtones of Leavis’s own literary tastes, including his proposal that the study of English contributes “towards remedying those disorders of civilized society” (*JG* 105) by creating a “collaborative community” within the classroom that serves as “the model or paradigm of the ideal [...] educated public that (ideally) makes possible at any time a performance of the function of criticism” (*JG* 109). This “collaborative community” formed through literary study is why, in Li An’s own words, English literature matters for postcolonial, post-independence Malaysia: “What literature does is connect things, even the most unlikely things. [...] That’s what we have to do with our lives, connect with others” (*JG* 9). What Li An does not realize, however, is that Leavis’s humanistic conceptualization of English literature cannot be appropriated to the Malaysian and Singaporean postcolonial context without severe modification.

In fact, Li An's own reactions to Leavis's philosophy belies the ideal of community and collaboration she explicitly avows. Lim's prose emphasizes the physical, sensuous aspect of Li An's literary learning: Lawrence's words taste like "spiced chickpeas" in her mouth, and her reading of Leavis's *Scrutiny* articles culminates (through one long, unbroken sentence) in the eating of "sizzling flaky curry puff[s]" and smoking of "two cigarettes in a row." This parallels the novel's descriptions of Li An's body language and bold, unfettered comportment: she is "a swaggering teddy boy" who rides "her bike bent over the handlebars" (JG 5); she likes "roaming on her motorbike like a boy," and "her tight jeans showed her thighs and calves, and her smoking made her conspicuous among a crowd" (JG 10). The upshot is that despite Li An's own avowal of literature's mission to connect people and create a microcosm of an ideal educated public or social community, her own body and behavior make her stand out rather than blend in: "She was like a Western girl – bold, loud, and unconcerned about her reputation" (JG 10). Lim's novel suggests that the Leavisian idea of a literary, collaborative community, which Li An espouses, cannot be formed within dominant conventions of Malaysian or Singaporean nationalism and society because Li An (the foremost proponent of this idea) stands out in contrast to rather than in connection with the Malaysians around her. Her very attachment to literary language and a community of readers causes her physical carriage and body language to be seen as an exceptional deviation rather than a normative aspiration. Furthermore, this Leavisian ideal cannot be realized because of the racialization of the Malay and English languages. Samad, ever the Malay nationalist, argues that Malay is the "national language" of Malaysia, whereas English is "a bastard language" that only one percent of Malaysians who will have contact with the rest of the world really need to learn. (JG 56).

“Better that like stay with like”: Henry's Chinese Way and Abdullah's Malay Rights

Li An's marriage to Henry Yeh, a Chinese Malaysian biochemist who is the son of a rich businessman, marks her interpellation by precisely these conventions of nationalism and women's place in postcolonial Southeast Asian societies, or what Shirley Geok-lin Lim calls the authoritarian domains of Confucianism, Malay feudalism, and (resistance towards) British colonialism. When Li An expresses her desire to go to America and become a writer after she finished her university degree, Henry's reaction reveals his commitment to a heroic, patriarchal nationalism. Henry argues that Malaysia “has just become a nation” and “is like an experiment,” an experiment that a scientist like Henry is conducting in order to “discover that truth which no one else has ever found” (JG 11). Despite Henry's assurance that he and Li An are on par with each other as “the important people in the country because we are the people with brains,” (JG 11) his vision of Malaysia as a scientific experiment corresponds to his own scientific vocation — Henry sees himself as the one who can search for and discover the truth that will make Malaysia work as a nation. This vocation is a distinctly masculine one in Malaysia, for Li An laments that she wishes she “were a man and a scientist. Then there would be a place for [her] here” (JG 13). Furthermore, Henry's physical movements as he proposes to Li An and asks her not to leave reveal how he treats her as a maternal figure: “he put his arms around her and put his head on her hair. He was like a little boy silently demanding her attention” (JG 13).

At the same time, the terms in which Henry casts the marriage position him as the sole breadwinner and Li An as his dependent wife:

Marry me, and stay with me. You won't have to teach. I'll pay off your

government bond, and you won't be forced to go back to your town. You don't have to work if you don't want to. [...] You could write, Li An. I'll let you write. You say it's time for Malaysians to write about themselves. You can't write about Malaysia in America. (JG 13)

For Henry, Li An's position in the marriage is defined by what she will *not* do: she "won't have to teach," "won't be forced to go back to [her] town," and "won't have to work." Li An's writerly ambitions are to be indulged and allowed by Henry — "I'll let you write" — and his idea of good writing is tied to a nativist identity, because for him Malaysians can only "write about themselves" in Malaysia rather than in America. Although he castigates Li An's desire to go to America as "a selfish way of acting" (JG 11), Henry's own marriage proposal is cast in terms of his own self-interest and the interest of a larger Malaysian national identity.

However, Li An's interrogation of this Malaysian national identity reveals the fault lines of race and gender within this collective representation. Soon after her marriage to Henry, Li An interrupts a discussion about race and language between her Chinese husband and their two Malay friends Abdullah and Samad. After his friends leave, Henry chastises Li An for contradicting Abdullah: "You have become too Westernized. First, you must accept what people say. If you cannot agree, you must still be quiet. Men get upset when women contradict them" (JG 57). Henry insists that Li An must use her "intelligence for agreement, not for arguing. That's the Chinese way. Even the men follow the rule" (JG 57) — although Henry himself does not follow this "Chinese way" since he disagrees with Abdullah and Samad earlier in their conversation. In light of Deniz Kandiyoti's and Nirmala Puroshotam's discussions of women and nationalist movements, we can see that Li An is being interpellated as a nurturing participant in the national collective (as a mother succoring her child-like husband Henry), and that she

also has to “articulate [her] gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse” (Kandiyoti 380). Li An's final rejoinder to Henry's admonishment that she must learn her place as a Chinese woman — “But I'm not Chinese! I'm Malaysian!” (JG 57) — is especially important. Li An's direct, emphatic statement reveals the limits of the liberatory national narrative constructed by both Chinese and Malay Malaysian leaders, because this narrative positions Malaysian women (of any ethnicity or culture) in the ambivalent position of being both standard bearers of cultural purity (in Li An's case, being Chinese) and standards of national progress (being intelligent, writing about Malaysia for Malaysians).

Furthermore, if Henry represents “the Chinese way” of social conventions and decorum, then his friend Abdullah represents the dominant Malay view of what Malaysia should be. It is a view that espouses a multiculturalism in which Malay culture is the standard to which all other ethnic groups should adhere. Abdullah's views express the terms of reference set by a Malay nationalist discourse, for he is a journalist working for a newspaper that “published daily editorials demanding special rights for Malays” (JG 44-45) that Li An finds disturbing, because “reading it made her feel she was in danger of attack in an alien country” even though she was born, has grown up, and lived in Malaysia all her life (JG 45). Even though Abdullah is, in person, a courteous and charming intellectual whom Li An finds persuasive, the novel's description of their intellectual conversations expresses the ambivalence of his argument:

His position was quite clear, but he argued with her subtly, like a good partner observing the patterns and courtesies of an elaborate dance. She didn't feel threatened when he explained the need for Malay special rights intelligently and elegantly; he made it seem fair and just, a readjustment to the fundamental design of the dance. She liked the idea of the Malaysian future as this gentle weaving readjustment and had asked Abdullah why his paper did not present its position in that light. He

answered that it did, she was simply not reading it correctly. (JG 45)

At first glance this passage suggests that Li An finds Abdullah's argument for Malay special rights, as the indigenous people who make up Malaysia's demographic majority, to be reasonable. Abdullah presents Malays and Chinese as being "good partner[s]" in "an elaborate dance" of Malaysian nationalism. But the passage also raises the question about the exact significance of the metaphor of the dance. Is the dance referring to (according to Abdullah) the dominant Malay culture that is the "fundamental design" that Malay special rights will make "fair and just," or is it (according to Li An) "the idea of the Malaysian future" that will be readjusted through this "gentle weaving," that will create a nation of Malaysian citizens and not just Malays and Chinese? If we were to push the metaphor of a courtly dance even further, we must ask: who is leading this dance, and is "a good partner" someone who is equally important as the leader, or someone who follows the leader well? Li An seems to believe in the former, whereas Abdullah's position is the latter, whereby Malays are the leaders in multicultural Malaysia. In this light, we can see that Abdullah's idea of a good partner is not too different from Henry's idea of a good partner: a wife who does not have to do anything and who uses her intelligence for agreeing rather than arguing. Abdullah's comment that Li An "was simply not reading [his newspaper's views] correctly" on the subject of race relations is similar to Henry's comment that Li An ought to follow the unspoken "Chinese way" of decorum. Henry assumes that Li An is too Westernized and needs to be more Chinese, while Abdullah implicitly suggests that Li An is too Chinese and cannot correctly comprehend the Malay mindset. The novel places Li An in this quandary in order to highlight how these implicit demands made by ethnic identities create an impasse in a postcolonial society that is trying to be both modernized and

Western as well as culturally pure and traditional at the same time.

These identities that are based on ideas of racial and cultural purity become a way of hierarchizing different groups in Malaysia, as we see in Abdullah's assessment of the tragic fate of Paroo and Gina. Paroo is an Indian (South Asian) Malaysian who is dating Gina, a Chinese Malaysian woman, against the wishes of both their families, who frown on interracial relationships. They attempt a joint suicide by overdosing on sleeping pills; Gina dies, but Paroo survives. Abdullah gives his analysis of the tragic situation to Li An:

Better that like stay with like. Indian and Chinese cannot mix, too many differences – food, custom, language. To be husband and wife must share same religion, same race, same history. Malay and Chinese also cannot mix, like oil and water. Malay have many *adat*, Islam also have *shariat*. All teach good action. Chinese have no *adat*, they eat pork, they like gamble, make money. [...] Of course, Chinese also have their own religion. But they must become like Malay if they want to marry Malay. (JG 46)

Abdullah translates what would be normally be considered ethnic differences – differences in “food, custom, language” – into indelible and incommensurable disparities such that the Malays, Indians, and Chinese in Malaysia cannot share the “same religion, same race, same history,” hence people from these various groups cannot intermarry and become “husband and wife.” But what is more important is that Adullah uses the failure of Paroo and Gina's attempts at being “husband and wife” as an analogy for the incompatibility of “Indian and Chinese” and “Malay and Chinese.” In each case, “Chinese” is the secondary term, just as “wife” is the secondary term in the first pairing of “husband and wife.” The terms Abdullah uses reveal his unspoken assumption of Malay superiority: he begins by discussing Paroo and Gina, an Indian-Chinese pairing, but his analysis quickly turns into a comparison of how Malays are superior to Chinese and how Malay culture is the standard that must be adhered to. For

Abdullah, Malays have "*adat*," or traditional prohibitions, whereas the Chinese have none, hence the Chinese are an inferior people who "eat pork," "like gamble," and "make money." Abdullah argues that it is possible for a Chinese woman to marry a Malay man, and in order to do so she "must become like Malay," but the insurmountability of ethnic difference that undergirds the idea of "better that like stay with like" suggests that it is impossible for a Chinese to truly become Malay. In either case, Abdullah (like Henry when he proposes to Li An) assumes that the Chinese woman and wife plays a secondary, subservient role to the Indian, Malay, or Chinese man and husband. Unlike Henry and Abdullah, Li An was optimistic that Paroo and Gina's mixed marriage gestured towards a Malaysian future, because "as [school]teachers, Gina and Paroo would serve as models of a new kind of Malaysian" and Gina "would have light-brown children who would look both and neither Indian and Chinese, the new Malaysians" (JG 41). The union of Paroo and Gina fails tragically in the first part of the novel, but Shirley Geok-lin Lim uses Li An's attachment to the English language as a way of foreshadowing her future role as the mother of a mixed or hybrid Eurasian girl, because Abdullah remarks that English is "a bastard language," and that only Malay is the truly "national language" of Malaysia (JG 56). Li An, as an English-speaking, English-teaching Malaysian Chinese woman, with her affair with the white American Peace Corps worker, Chester Brookfield, challenges these tightly policed racial and cultural boundaries by holding steadfastly to a "bastard" language and a "bastard" child.

The Burden of the White, American Man: Chester Brookfield

Chester Brookfield, when he first appears, seems to be a refreshing change from

the authoritarian realms of Chinese tradition and Malay nationalism that Henry and Abdullah stand for. Chester is an American Peace Corps volunteer who majored in anthropology at Princeton, and he prefers anthropology to literature because he does not “think [he] can learn as much about people from books as from the things they make and use every day” (JG 33). As such, he tries to spend “as much time as he could with Malaysians” (JG 30) by teaching woodworking at a vocational school in Kuala Lumpur, living with Malay roommates (Abdullah and Samad), and taking Malay lessons in his spare time (JG 29). Chester also tries to become as native as possible, eating “spicy food in huge gulps without any complaints,” joking that “perhaps [he] was a Malay in another life” (JG 31) and echoing Abdullah’s idea that “Malay is the only real culture in this country” (JG 33). But Chester soon discovers that Malaysians are not as naïve or as native as he would like them to be. “Only three students” take his woodworking class because “no one wanted to be an artisan-carpenter in Malaysia” (JG 29), and these students persistently ask him questions about America (JG 30). Chester soon finds himself grudgingly teaching English language classes at the school, because the headmaster “says what he really needs now is another English teacher, not a carpenter” (JG 36). Chester’s situation suggests that both he and a Malay nationalist like Abdullah expect Malaysians to hold fast to a purified native identity tied to a specific culture and language. Lim’s novel points out, however obliquely, that the students themselves – the next generation of Malaysians – are more interested in learning a language tied to international prestige and global capital. They thus thwart or frustrate the ambitions of both the Western anthropologist and the local nationalist to create an immutable, uncontaminated identity based on an unchanging language or culture.

As racial and political tensions rise in Malaysia, Chester finds the local charm

fading quickly, for “the longer he stayed with Abdullah and Samad [...] the more he realized how different he was from them. He was tired of drinking rose syrup and of having chilies in his food” (JG 64). Instead, he uses his friendship with Li An to expound the virtues of American culture and literature, virtues he regards as inherently and universally democratic. On one hand, Chester vehemently espouses anti-colonial and anti-British views; he scoffs at Li An’s love of English literature, arguing that the Americans “had a revolution and threw them out with the tea bags” and that Li An should be teaching her “own culture” (JG 33), which, for Chester, can only be Malay culture. But at the same time as Chester exhorts Li An to be more culturally authentic, he also wants her to keep up with the times by taking her to the “United States Information Service Library, where she chose books by William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Robert Penn Warren, and John Dos Passos” (JG 64). Chester argues that American literature is what Li An should be reading and using as inspiration for her own writing, because American writers are “modern writers” who speak “for a democratic American vista,” the ideal of the United States as “a melting pot” where “everyone melted into the American middle class” (JG 64). Therefore, Chester concludes, “English has left with the British,” and Li An “should really emigrate to the States” (JG 64), since Li An’s own vision of an egalitarian, truly multicultural Malaysia makes her “almost sound like an American” (JG 35). The irony here is that Chester does not realize he is substituting one form of Western dominance for another. The British colonial authorities may have left, but Chester represents an American geopolitical consciousness that is trying to incorporate various postcolonial nations into its own post-World War II hegemony. Chester assimilates Li An’s vision for Malaysia — a vision that tries to ameliorate the conflicts between essential cultural or racial identities — as a characteristically American

“democratic vista” or “melting pot,” rather than considering Li An’s vision on its own terms as a critical form of postcolonial national consciousness trying to undo the effects of British colonialism. Chester’s paradoxical insistence that Li An should be traditionally authentic and teach her own (i.e. Malay) culture and at the same time read modern American writers to keep up with the times also echoes the demands of postcolonial nationalists who want women to be both symbols of cultural essence and emblems of national progress. Chester’s exhortation that Li An “should really emigrate” to America since her personality already seems so American is therefore not too different from the two forms of interpellation we have seen from Henry and Abdullah: the concept of a “Chinese way” that all ethnic Chinese Malaysians should automatically and naturally obey, and the separate-but-equal idea of “better that like stay with like.”

Despite the similarities between Chester’s American thinking and Henry’s and Abdullah’s attitudes, Li An is deeply attracted to him. After sleeping with him on the night of the racial riots on May 13 1969, Li An “knew he was planning something for them, something wonderful” because she felt “no man could touch a woman as he had her without love, and love had inevitable consequences” (*JG* 86). However, despite his confident and breezy manner, Chester turns out, like Henry, to be uncertain, child-like, and reluctant to take responsibility for his involvement in local affairs. In contrast to Li An’s hope that he would take her back to America with him, Chester reveals that he, along with the other Peace Corps members, will be leaving soon, because, as he says: “our parents were after the embassy people to make sure we were safe, and we were warned not to get involved with the local trouble” (*JG* 87). Chester further emphasizes that “The Peace Corps is concerned about its volunteers in Malaysia, and is urging us to consider our options. It isn’t good for Americans to get in the middle of foreign national

politics" (JG 87-88). Chester is gradually distancing himself from and absolving responsibility for Li An and Malaysia; in both passages he stresses how his parents, the U.S. embassy, and the Peace Corps respectively are circumscribing his actions, and concludes with the impersonal, declarative statement that "it isn't good for Americans to get in the middle of foreign national politics." Chester's flight from Malaysia reveals the limits of the apparently attractive American alternative to Chinese cultural tradition and Malay racial nationalism: Li An, despite sounding "almost like an American" in her democratic ideals, cannot be incorporated into American society despite Chester's insistence that she would fit in perfectly there. For Chester, Li An becomes part of the "foreign national politics" that he should not "get in the middle of," and his refusal to take Li An with him to America or to acknowledge that they had sexual relations suggests that, on a larger scale, the vision of America as a melting pot where everyone becomes middle class cannot be completely adapted to postcolonial Malaysia or Singapore.

In fact, Chester's attitude and involvement (despite his avowal of detachment) in Malaysian affairs is characteristic of an Orientalist approach towards other cultures. Asia, and more specifically, Malaysia, becomes an object to enrich the knowledge and life experience of Chester, who is an anthropologist at heart and by training. In the wake of his own marital disappointments eleven years later, Chester begins to yearn for Malaysia, Li An, and his daughter whom he has never met. After the events of 1969, Lim's novel jumps to 1980 and the location changes to upstate New York, where we find that Chester has obtained a Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University. But Chester is assigned to teach sociology at small liberal-arts college for women, where his students "showed almost no curiosity about actual foreign countries" and "thought of

Asia and Africa as primitive and unbearably savage" (JG 115). He undergoes a vasectomy at the behest of his American wife, Meryl, who argues that "there's no way [they] can have a baby and be fair to everyone" since she is rushing to finish a thesis for her Master's degree and is applying to be "the first woman commissioner in the history" of the New York City Parks Department (JG 102). Confronted by an unsatisfying career, the loss of his biological ability to father a child, and the determined ambitions of his wife, Chester begins to remember his time in Malaysia with a mixture of fear and fascination:

It was a kind of panic, like the panic he felt when he saw the black smoke the night of the riots of Kuala Lumpur, a sensation of falling through space not knowing that there would be a landing. The same panic he felt when he read Paroo's letter about Li An's baby, and counted the dates and found that they matched. He had suppressed the panic each time and come through. After all, neither the riots nor Li An's baby had been his business. He could leave and he did. (JG 110-111)

Despite the overtones of turmoil and discord in the word "panic," Chester seems to relish this panic as a surmountable emotional obstacle, something that he can suppress "each time and come through" because, as an anthropologist, he sees himself personally and professionally as an observer rather than a participant, hence "the riots and Li An's baby" were not "his business" at all. The privilege he enjoys as a white, male, American anthropologist to come and go freely is predicated on his anthropological training: "to be white, to know one was white, to find anything else peculiar and uncomfortable, was no sin — it became, in fact, the basis for curiosity and inquiry, one's fate" (JG 153).

Chester, in the end, is more fascinated and curious about differences rather than similarities, and commits himself "to study difference, not overcome it," and to do so "guiltlessly" (JG 154). Furthermore, Chester's desire to travel to Singapore to see Li An and his daughter Suyin is driven by "curiosity" to "see what the child's like," (JG 159)

rather than a sense of responsibility towards Li An. This suggests that Chester's professional acumen is premised on an essential racial identity of being "white" that parallels Henry's Chinese traditions and Abdullah's Malay nationalism, and it undermines the idea of the "melting pot" and "a democratic American vista" represented by American literature about which he earlier tries to convince Li An. Chester's professional and personal curiosity and inquiry is exactly what Edward Said criticizes as a "vantage point outside the actuality of relationships among cultures, among unequal imperial and non-imperial powers" that confers "the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting the world free from the encumbering interests and engagements of the ongoing relationships themselves" (55). *Joss and Gold* can be read as such a critique of this American Orientalist epistemological privilege as much as an interrogation of the essentialist discourses of race and culture that underlie official Malaysian multiculturalism. Lim's novel gathers together Henry, Abdullah, Chester as representatives of their similar discourses of race, language, and cultural identity, and the novel offers a "multilogical" critique of these "authoritarian domains [that] overlap each other but not sufficiently so as to preserve the illusion of totalization" ("Anglo-American Feminism" 35).

"She would never again be unburdened or alone": Li An, Suyin, and an Alternative Community of Women in Singapore

Joss and Gold, however, is more than an exposition of these three forms of masculine, nationalist or Orientalist domination of women. Instead, we should recall that Lim does not think of these systems as absolutely dominating — as she mentions above, the illusion of totalization is broken when the systems coincide and overlap.

Instead, “it is not these systems but their intersections that offered [...] points of escape” (“Anglo-American Feminism” 37) and allow Li An and her daughter Suyin a way out of the patriarchal social milieu of postcolonial Malaysia and Singapore. In the last part of *Joss and Gold*, Lim’s narration focuses on Li An and her surrogate family made up of her close friend Ellen (now the principal of a high school in Singapore) and her mother-in-law, Second Mrs Yeh (Henry’s father’s second wife, whom he acknowledges as a mother), and her half-Chinese, half-American daughter, Suyin. It is in this last section that the novel makes more explicit connections with Asian American women’s writing, especially through the tropes of mother-daughter narratives and revisions of East Asian myths and folktales discussed by Patricia P. Chu. It is also here that Lim explores how a surrogate family of women can contest the framework of state authority expressed through the nuclear family, a framework discussed by Max Horkheimer in his essay “Authority and the Family.” Horkheimer argues that “the totality of relationships in the present age, the universal web of things, was strengthened and stabilized by one particular element, namely, authority, and the process of strengthening and stabilization went on essentially at the particular, concrete level of the family. The family was the ‘germ cell’ of bourgeois culture and it was, like the authority in it, a living reality” (128). But within this “germ cell” of bourgeois culture, alternative possibilities nonetheless existed in nascent form, particularly through the figure of the woman and her wifely and maternal love and care. Horkheimer acknowledges that the place of the woman in the modern family is still “in large measure, socially and legally under the authority of the male and is seen in relation to him” (118), but he emphasizes that this subordination does not necessarily lead to conformity with the dominant authority of bourgeois culture and the modern state. “Because,” Horkheimer explains, the family “still fosters

human relations which are determined by the woman, the present-day family is a source of strength to resist the total dehumanization of the world and contains an element of antiauthoritarianism" (118). These human relations determined by women "took a positive form in sexual love and especially in maternal care. The growth and happiness of the other are willed in such unions. A felt opposition therefore arises between them and the hostile reality outside" (114). Horkheimer also stresses that in and of themselves, these unions governed and mediated by women are not a coherent or fully-fledged form of resistance, but rather "love for a mother who is dominated by the father can also sow in the children the seeds of a lasting spirit of rebellion" (120).

It is possible to argue that Horkheimer's analysis of women's position in the bourgeois, nuclear family continues to objectify them as conjugal and maternal caregivers, responsible for nurturing their husbands and children. But I wish to emphasize what Horkheimer calls the "felt opposition" (114) that arises from within this tightly-knit family structure. In other words, Horkheimer's conceptualization of women's loving and caregiving role in the bourgeois family amounts to a critique of dominant social and state authority from within the grain of this dominant discourse's logic; it works through women's nurturing role and caring affection rather than adopting a standpoint or approach that is external to the authoritarian system. If we consider Horkheimer's formulation alongside Deniz Kandiyoti's arguments about nationalism and feminism and Nirmala Puroshotam's observations about feminism in Singapore, then Lim's use of Asian American literary tropes can be read as a critique of Malaysian-Singaporean patriarchal nationalism using this nationalism's own terms, rather than as an imposition of American radical feminist thinking onto Southeast Asian societies. Specifically, Lim's employment of the mother-daughter narrative and

reworking of East Asian myths challenge the nationalist exhortations that (on one hand) women should “mind their familial responsibilities” and “make more babies” in order to “best serve the ‘nation’” (Puroshotam 335), and that (on the other hand) women have a duty to “reproduce their culture through the continued use of their native language, the persistence of culinary and other habits and the socialisation of the young” (Kandiyoti 382). In this final section of *Joss and Gold*, Lim takes up the logic of pure biological and cultural reproduction and challenges them on their own grounds through Li An’s creation of an all-female surrogate family for Suyin, through Li An’s profoundly physical relationship both to her daughter and literary language, and finally through Suyin herself and the mythical figure of Madam White Snake, a female snake spirit in Chinese mythology who enters a forbidden romance with a human scholar and is punished for eternity because of this transgression. Furthermore, Lim’s nationalist critique of both Malaysia and Singapore focuses on the technocratic and instrumental use of language and race in these societies driven by the pursuit of global capital. On one hand, this final section reveals how all the characters we saw in 1969 in Malaysia end up as successful business professionals in Singapore twelve years later. It seems, on the surface, as if race, language, gender, and culture are not as important after all once everyone migrates to Singapore. But on the other hand, Lim also points out how a dominant Chinese identity – and with it, a male-dominant concept of race and identity similar to the ones espoused by Henry and Abdullah back in Malaysia – underscores Singapore’s economic progress and social fabric.

Singapore’s economic progress is explicitly described in the last section of the novel, and all the characters who in 1969 held immutable views about race, culture, and identity seem to have changed their tune in 1981. Abdullah and Samad, the two Malay

nationalists, are “now living in Singapore” and have become “VIP CEOs” (JG 165) in Singapore, and because of their success they “also have big houses in Malaysia” (JG 166). Abdullah was also part of the leading Malay political party in Malaysia, UMNO, “before joining OKM – Overseas Koranic Majulis – [a] big-time travel company [to] bring Muslims to *haji* in Mecca” (JG 166). Abdullah, despite his earlier emphasis on special Malay rights and Malay indigeneity, studied journalism in the USA, and his “English had become New England; two years at Harvard had done what almost twenty years of British education had failed to do” (JG 188). Furthermore, in 1981 Abdullah is about to fly back to Kuala Lumpur to open a new mosque, a symbolic act to “show the fundamentalists that we can make money and also be good Muslims at the same time” (JG 189). Abdullah even concedes that “Li An was right” and that “the national language is the soul of our country, but English is the language of money for Malaysia and Singapore. The goal of Malaysia is to make money. So English is the destiny of our country” (JG 249). The way Abdullah repeats the terms “money” and “make money” suggests that underlying the seemingly color- or race-blind economic ethos of Singapore, there is an aspect of ethnic Chinese culture that Abdullah himself castigated right after the racial riots in Kuala Lumpur in 1969: “Chinese have no *adat*, they eat pork, they like gamble, make money” (JG 46). Beneath Abdullah’s comment that he is opening a mosque in Malaysia to prove that money-making Malays can also be good Muslims is an anxiety that making money is an inherently Chinese trait, and that his Malay identity and language – “the national language [that] is the soul of our country” (JG 249) – is slowly being eroded by English – “the language of money” – as well.

Furthermore, the newsletter that Li An edits for her company, BioSynergy, holds an important place in Singapore’s economic climate, for “it was a hot document studied

by investors, shareholders, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore for clues to the company's health and future" (JG 176). Li An's choice of the newsletter's logo suggests a strong Chinese cultural symbolism behind this highly-scrutinized document: it consists of "two Ss" that "suggest the shapes of the dragon and the phoenix" (JG 259), implying "the dragon's harmonic meanings and the phoenix's regenerative energies," and even though it resembled "something European and medieval, yet it was clearly Chinese in origin" (JG 260). Chester, upon his arrival in Singapore in 1981, is also astounded by how, on one hand, "The Chinese were everywhere, but they had English names" and "Anglo-Chinese was the norm," yet both the Singaporean state and its people are pushing for a "Chinese-Chinese [identity] to be the norm" (JG 200). Li An's logo design for her company's newsletter emphasizes this conjunction of Anglo-Chinese normativity couched in Chinese-Chinese cultural terms. Henry's idea of the "Chinese way," which, in the Malaysia of 1969, suggests propriety and knowing one's place, has become, in the Singapore of 1981, an objectified ethnic and cultural identity that allows the state to compete actively in globalization and transnational capital flows. However, the beneficiaries of this new conjunction of identity and globalization are clearly male. Li An's boss, Ang Swee, who is the chief executive officer of BioSynergy, is ethnically Chinese but holds an Australian citizenship simply because it has "more cachet" (JG 224), and "he never worried about being superior" but "simply enjoyed the condition" (JG 224) of being both Chinese but also Westernized. Similarly, Abdullah and Samad, both "VIP CEOs" (JG 165) who own large properties in Malaysia but have chosen to settle in and do business in Singapore, move frequently between the two countries while their wives and children remain in Singapore. In contrast, Li An's move to Singapore is not of her own volition; it is necessitated by her abandonment by Henry after Suyin's

birth.

Even in this climate of cultural Chineseness and economic success, Lim's novel shows us how Li An creates a family composed completely of women who can nurture her half-Chinese, half-American daughter Suyin, who in Chinese-Chinese Singapore becomes the brunt of racist remarks such as "chap cheng kwei — mixed breed devil" (JG 255). Ellen, Li An's close friend from college, becomes an older-sister figure who "swore at Li An for "crying" over Henry's abandonment; she instead urges Li An to put "all [her] strength into nursing the baby" (JG 205). Lim's novel emphasizes that Ellen, who remains single and dedicated to her career as a schoolteacher and later headmistress of a high school, does not possess romantic or erotic feelings for Li An; her love for Li An is expressed in terms of friendship and responsibility for not preventing Li An's romantic liaison with Chester: "I only do this for old friend's sake. Otherwise I will feel too guilty for words" (JG 181). Ellen is not a surrogate lover, but rather an older sister for Li An and "a second parent" for Suyin. Ellen serves as the role model of a strong-willed, independent woman for Li An; from the latter's point of view, Ellen is "like a minor goddess" busy "rearranging their lives," helping Li An and Suyin look for an apartment in Singapore and then finding "Li An the job as a part-time copy editor in the communications department in BioSynergy," which eventually leads to Li An's high-ranking position in the present (JG 181). Once they move to Singapore, "Auntie Ellen" becomes a "second mother" (JG 205) who "picked Suyin up from school, supervised her homework, and then went home, many evenings only after Li An got home from work" late at night (JG 196). Instead of reconstructing the bourgeois nuclear family with its heterosexual sexual and parental roles, Lim's novel appropriates the framework but emphasizes instead what Horkheimer observes as "the growth and happiness of the

other” that arises “especially in maternal care” and, in this case, in sisterly affection between Li An and Ellen (114).

If Ellen is a role model, an older sister, and a second parent, then Second Mrs Yeh serves as the matriarch of this reconstituted family. Second Mrs Yeh, the second wife of Henry’s father, gives Li An’s daughter legitimacy under the Yeh family name by adamantly claiming Suyin as her granddaughter. Second Mrs Yeh is the one who “picked the name [for Li An’s child] months before she was born” and urged Li An to keep Henry’s family name (Yeh) to make life “more safe” for Suyin in the future (JG 169). Second Mrs Yeh, or Grandma Yeh as she is called in the last part of *Joss and Gold*, shares a physical bond with the infant Suyin that is comparable to Li An’s own bond with her daughter:

“She’s Henry’s baby,” Second Mrs. Yeh crooned to the infant, her visits unchecked by Henry’s absence. Humming her song, she rubbed olive oil onto the carapace where the skull bones had not closed, the light brown hair twisting over the tender spot where only skin protected the brain. “Ah Pah’s [Henry’s father’s] granddaughter,” she breathed over the membrane, fingers stroking the green oil into the scalp. [...] Invisible, unerasable. Second Mrs. Yeh’s granddaughter. (JG 170)

Despite Suyin’s obvious physical appearance, Grandma Yeh insists that Suyin is her own granddaughter. This insistence seems to fly in the face of conventional logic, and might be read as stubborn self-denial or sheer naïvete. But if we understand Grandma Yeh’s actions in terms of Horkheimer’s analysis of authority and the family, we can see that she is exercising her power as secondary matriarch within the Yeh family to protect Suyin. Mr Yeh himself was killed during the May 1969 riots in Kuala Lumpur (JG 83-84), and the novel does not reveal the whereabouts of his first wife and her family. On one hand, Henry, born of Mr Yeh’s first wife and heir to the Yeh family name, is the new authority figure in the Yeh family; Grandma Yeh urges Li An to keep Suyin’s last name

as Yeh, thus acknowledging that (as Horkheimer says) women in Singapore are still “socially and legally under the authority of the male” and “seen in relation to him” (118). On the other hand, we can also read Grandma Yeh’s use of the Yeh family name as a female appropriation of Henry’s patriarchal power. This masculine discourse presupposes that women will maintain racial and cultural purity by reproducing legitimate offspring, but Grandma Yeh subverts it by claiming legitimacy through the letter or the logic of conjugal relations rather than through blood or biological relations. In other words, Grandma Yeh reasons that if Suyin (however racially mixed) is Li An’s daughter, and Li An is her daughter-in-law and Henry’s wife (despite their divorce), then Suyin is therefore the granddaughter of herself and her deceased husband, Mr Yeh. Grandma Yeh asserts Suyin’s place within the Yeh family through her own position as second wife, which, though secondary, is nonetheless symbolically and financially powerful; she turns the Yeh family name into an artificial sign which she shrewdly deploys for her own purposes to safeguard Li An and Suyin’s future within a society that values patrimony and racial purity.

Symbolically speaking, Grandma Yeh’s rubbing of olive oil on the infant Suyin signifies her grand-maternal blessing of the child, making Suyin not just “Henry’s baby” – a biological product – but, more importantly, the legitimate “granddaughter” of “Ah Pah” (Mr Yeh), a status which is “invisible” but also “unerasable” through Grandma Yeh’s matriarchal invocation. The passage quoted above emphasizes the physical details of Suyin’s infant body, especially “the carapace where the skull bones had not closed” and “where only skin protected the brain.” While Suyin’s body may not yet be completely formed, with Grandma Yeh’s blessing, her identity as a member of the Yeh family is formed completely, and she is thus protected and made “more safe” for the

future. This blessing takes on a financial significance towards the end of the novel, when Grandma Yeh dies and leaves all the financial shares she inherited from her husband, Mr Yeh, to Suyin (JG 254). Henry has to honor Grandma Yeh's will and become the executor of her legacy. In doing so, he finally has to acknowledge that he is Suyin's father, something that Grandma Yeh "had wanted him to say all these years, and with her death, he could finally say it" (JG 262). Grandma Yeh's foresight in keeping Suyin's last name as Yeh, and her insistence (against all common sense and convention) over the years to "everyone" that Suyin is her granddaughter and therefore Henry's daughter finally proves effective, because even though "Suyin was a backward family bond," Henry, "being now a good Chinese father [himself], would not refuse that bond" (JG 262-263). Suyin can now claim a father, even if belatedly, and Henry's presence prevents her schoolmates from calling her "'Sin-ner' again in Cho Kang [Middle School], not after they had seen him come for her" (JG 255) after school.

Despite her ostracization at the hands of her classmates, who regard her as a mixed-blood demon, Suyin is also an object of desire by both Asian and Western characters in the last part of Lim's novel. Suyin embodies the cross-cultural, cross-racial nightmare of cultural purists in Malaysia, Singapore, and America, but at the same time she also represents the logical outcome of the multicultural and melting pot ideals these same purists uphold as an important part of their respective national consciousness. When Chester sees Suyin for the first time, for example, he noticed the physical features of her mixed heritage, "red-gold hairs shining" on her arms, and "her dark hair [that] gleamed with russet streaks" (JG 222). Chester is then overcome by "shame that was like a different kind of love — the first time he had loved so shamefully — as he watched his daughter walk away" (JG 222). Chester's ambivalence — such fierce love paired with

such intense shame — is the result of his conflicted desires as an American Orientalist anthropologist: on one hand he has chosen “the bland clean shampooed middle-class reality that bright energetic Meryl promised” (JG 222), but that same reality has also taken away his power to reproduce, thanks to Meryl’s insistence on his vasectomy. Chester’s only offspring, therefore, is this half-Chinese, half-American girl who disrupts the “bland clean shampooed middle-class reality” he had constructed for himself in upstate New York. Abdullah also discusses Suyin’s hybridity in similarly ambivalent terms when he talks to Chester about his experience as a refugee-camp officer in the 1970s when Vietnamese boat people landed in Malaysia: “[Suyin] is beautiful. That is the way with Eurasians. Allah is merciful. These children will always have problems, so beauty is the gift to sweeten their path. [...] There I met some of the *bui doi*, children of the dust. Beautiful children! Golden skin, golden hair, face like *orang puteh* [white person], soul like Asian. But no one wants them” (JG 189). From Abdullah’s point of view, the beautiful “golden skin” and “golden hair” of Eurasians or mixed-blood children like Suyin is compensation for their illegitimacy and bastard status, because “no one wants them” as part of their family, society, or nation. Abdullah presents this as a *fait accompli*, simply “the way with Eurasians,” much like Henry’s insistence on a conventional “Chinese way” (JG 57) or his own earlier admonishment, “better that like stay with like” (JG 46). But mixed in with Abdullah’s rejection of these hybrid children as legitimate members of a national community is a fascination with their existence, with their “face like *orang puteh*” and “soul like Asian” — a realization that these children are products of physical and cultural contact between Asia and the West that cultural nationalists like Abdullah want to disavow. Henry, after Grandma Yeh’s death, and as executor of her legacy to Suyin, also wants “her, Suyin, Grandma’s beloved

granddaughter, his own daughter, to understand what he was doing and why" (JG 254), despite having abandoned Suyin and her mother right after her birth. As I discussed earlier, Grandma Yeh's matriarchal influence forces Henry to come to terms with this multicultural, multiracial child as his own daughter, thereby challenging the essentialist belief that one's legitimate offspring must be of the same race, ethnicity, or culture.

But Lim's novel also challenges this masculine discourse of cultural purity through Suyin herself and her role as the mythical Madam White Snake in her school's Chinese drama performance. Lim's inclusion of this myth and Suyin's participation in it echoes Maxine Hong Kingston's revisioning of the Chinese folktale *Journey to the West* and the adventures of the Monkey King. Kingston's appropriation of the Monkey King is part of a "vision of Asian American culture as dialogic, inclusive, adaptive, and alive" (Chu 187); Lim puts the myth of Madam White Snake to similar use, claiming it as a narrative of transgression and the liberating power of female sexuality that challenges the circumscription of women's bodies and sexuality within official nationalist discourses. Suyin's "Mandarin was bad," but "with her green-brown eyes, reddish hair, and dramatic height, the Chinese language teacher had insisted on putting her on stage for Chinese drama night" (JG 207). Suyin has the most important but absolutely speechless part, Madam White Snake herself. Despite the Chinese teacher's assurance to Li An that the role was about how "Madam White Snake was breaking the laws of propriety and of ascribed position by changing into a human" and that "Suyin's slinky silence was supposed to represent a divine spirit, not her failed Mandarin" (JG 207-208), Li An is fearful and anxious that her daughter will have to be "dressed in white tights and tee, sequined and spangled" and "wriggle on stage" as a "female, snaky, hissing, nonhuman, non-Chinese-speaking freak of Cho Kang Secondary School" (JG 207). The

experience reminds Li An that “in Singapore Suyin would never be Chinese. She would never be the lead actress, and she would learn to enjoy the eyes of the boys as her body moved, sinuously exaggerated” (JG 229-230). Here, Suyin’s sinuous performance and failed Mandarin signify her inability to meet Singaporean standards of racial and cultural purity; her “green-brown eyes, reddish hair, and dramatic height” are to be placed on stage as a spectacle, as a “nonhuman, non-Chinese-speaking freak” that serves as an implicit warning to any who dare think of “breaking the laws of propriety and of ascribed position.” This reading of the Madam White Snake performance as a humiliation of Suyin is certainly correct, but Lim also suggests that Suyin’s “slinky silence” and her nascent sexuality that “got her attention from the boys” (JG 229) may have a more positive, transgressive aspect in the future. As Auntie Ellen reminds Suyin toward the end of the novel, “she could decide whatever she wanted to once she was eighteen” and that “very soon, she would be eighteen and a woman like [Ellen and Li An]” (JG 257). For Li An, Suyin’s sexuality can only be exploited by men as a fetish. Suyin’s consciousness, her sexuality, and the objectification of her body are split apart in Li An’s thinking, such that Suyin “enjoys” the “eyes of the boys” as “her body moved” – her body becomes a fetish dislocated from her own sense of self. But from Suyin’s point of view, she is the actor and subject of her performance who can employ her physical self to her benefit, hence “she had quickly discovered that wriggling her body got her attention from the boys” (JG 229). To say that Suyin has grasped a form of female agency would be overstating the matter, but if we consider the radical aspects of the Madam White Snake legend – “a divine spirit” who breaks the “laws of propriety” – then Suyin’s growing awareness of the power of her hybrid body might represent a move away from “the identification of women as privileged bearers of corporate

identities and boundary markers of their communities” towards “a language of identity which allows for difference and diversity without making women its hostages” (Kandiyoti 388). We should remember that the “attention” Suyin receives in the last section of the novel is not just the erotic gaze of high school boys, for she is also the recipient of two forms of paternal attention: Chester’s intense (albeit shamed) love, and Henry’s meticulous (albeit belated) affection as the executor of her estate. While Suyin might fail at Mandarin, the official mother tongue of Chinese Singaporeans, and thus not be considered Chinese enough to be a Singaporean on these linguistic grounds, Lim’s novel suggests a different sort of language of identification, one that allows Suyin to be a Singaporean through the legitimation of her hybridity through both her American and Chinese fathers – the national discourse of cultural purity within multiculturalism is recast as a heterogeneity that exceeds the categorical boundaries of ethnicity and race.

Language and literature also becomes important for Li An in the last part of the novel, where her previously held ideals about literature’s relationship to life and community undergo a dramatic change because of her job and her daughter Suyin. When she was a student at the university in Kuala Lumpur, Li An professed that literature, just like Henry’s biochemistry, was “the real science of life” (JG 8) and held the Leavisian view that “what literature does is connect things, even the most unlikely things. [...] That’s what we have to do with our lives, connect with others” (JG 9). Despite her own emphasis on the scientific and community-building power of literature, Lim’s novel stresses how Li An responds to literary language at a deeply physical level that cannot be reduced to “the real science of life.” She relishes “the overflow of sibilants like spiced chickpeas in her mouth” (JG 4) when she recited a passage from D.H. Lawrence aloud; when Chester reads a poem by A.E. Housman, clearly “making fun of the poem,

declaiming the words *spires* and *farms* with mock relish," Li An "couldn't help appreciating the music of the English words" as "the killing air came out of the words and echoed in her body even as Chester and Henry were smiling at the absurdity of the ideas" (JG 32). Li An's body resonates to Housman's poem even though it is being read in a mocking way by Chester, because for Li An English is more than an instrumental language to be used for scientific analysis or for making money (as Abdullah states during his Singaporean years): "the English ingested through years of reading and talking now formed the delicate web of tissues in her brain. Giving up her language would be like undergoing a crippling operation on her brain" (JG 56).

English and literature become a way of representing her identity as both a woman and a Malaysian. Li An, using her analytical skills, rebuts Abdullah and Samad's arguments "Malay is good enough for this country" since only one percent of Malaysians need to learn English (JG 56). Li An silences them by asking "who will choose the one percent" and "what about Malaysians who may want to strive to join that one percent" (JG 57). After this heated conversation, Li An further rejects Henry's insistence that she should be less Westernized and adhere to Chinese feminine decorum by arguing that she is "not Chinese" but "Malaysian" (JG 57). On the night she sleeps with Chester, the night of the 1969 racial riots in Malaysia, Li An's body is resonating with the political, racial, and sexual tension, such that "her body was vibrating quietly. The vibrations, she recognized, were a natural motion of her body. Every body was constantly vibrating. The breath, pulse, heartbeat, set up a ceaseless motion, a tension of desire that was life" (JG 80). Lim emphasizes here that Li An's desire for Chester is not simply erotic; it is an extension of her body's resonance — "a tension of desire that was life" — that is responding to the turbulent political and racial climate in Malaysia, just as

the “killing air” of Housman’s poem “echoed in her body.” Li An’s body, in other words, is connected through its corporeality to the problems of the Malaysian and Singaporean communities in ways that exceed the framework of wifely and maternal responsibilities ascribed by official nationalist discourse. Language and literature do not allow her to connect with Henry, Abdullah, or Samad, but it plays an important part in Li An’s consciousness of herself as a material, gendered subject.

In Singapore, faced with brutal economic necessity, Li An changes her attitude to language and literature when she begins working as the editor for BioSynergy’s newsletter. At first, it seems as if Li An has given up her idealistic view of literature and settled for producing commercial, informational writing: “immaculate layout, letter-perfect editing, careful content control. A company organ, a mouthpiece, slick, glib, superficial, glossy” (*JG* 179-180). But even Li An’s rejection of the empowering value of literature is couched in literary terms. She switches from a humanist, Leavisian view of language to a modernist one, such that she “no longer read significance, merely the acts. No ideas but in things, the poet William Carlos Williams had said. That had been the hardest poem for her to learn, to embrace the empty depth in the glittering surface of things” (*JG* 179). This approach to literature, however, is more in accordance with her own physical resonance with language that belies her earlier humanist mindset, for her body is not an “empty surface” beneath “the glittering surface of things,” but rather a thing in itself that is full of “ideas,” brimming with (as in the earlier passage) “a ceaseless motion, a tension of desire that was life” (*JG* 80). Far from abandoning literature for slick superficialities, Li An, in her new job, gains a new grasp of the immanent connection between content and form not only in literature, but also in her intimate connection with her daughter Suyin. Nursing her infant daughter, Li An finds that

sensations flowed and filled the cavities in [her] body: her infant's mass, the baby hair texture, fine as cocoon threads, the odor of baby — a milky powdered sweetness, perfume of the newly born, her blessed existence. Li An was surfeited by those moments, which shaped that compact space encompassing Suyin and herself, and which sufficed, she felt, forever. (JG 208-209)

Just as reading Lawrence's prose gives her physical relish and hearing Housman's poetry makes her body resonate with the musicality of language, Suyin becomes a work of art that fills Li An's senses with "milky powdered sweetness" and the "perfume of the newly born" rather than the spicy sibilance of chickpeas or the killing air of England. The "blessed existence" that Li An celebrates with Suyin recalls Grandma Yeh's blessing of Suyin as she bathed the infant in olive oil, paying attention as well to the baby's head and her light brown hair. Through Suyin, Li An creates "a compact space" of maternal love that is not anchored to wifely responsibility, and surrounding this compact space of mother and daughter is the close-knit and alternative family structure including Ellen and Grandma Yeh.

My description of Suyin as a work of art is not meant to dehumanize or objectify her; rather approaching Suyin in this manner allows us to answer the question that Liew Geok Leong raises in her afterword to the novel: why does Li An insist on having Suyin rather than getting rid of the baby before or after her birth? Just like Grandma Yeh's legitimation of Suyin as a member of the Yeh family, Li An's decision to keep Chester's child seems to fly in the face of conventional logic or common sense. Leong suggests that Li An keeps the baby because her own emotional yearning for a child matters more than a consideration about the baby's troubled future as a racially mixed child (271). While this is certainly possible, the conclusion of *Joss and Gold* seems to take this maternal yearning one step further: it emphasizes the crystallization of literary

reading together with the experience of being a woman and a mother in a postcolonial society where language is seen as an instrumental tool and women are positioned as cultural paragons and boundary markers. Li An, after a heated conversation with Ellen about allowing Suyin to visit Chester in America, realizes that it is Suyin herself who must “answer these questions” (JG 264) about the sudden presence of not one but two fathers from different countries and cultures. As Li An stands, “imagining the slow regularity of her daughter’s breathing,” she retraces the important events of her life that have led up to this moment: “marriage, love, whatever she shared with Henry or Chester, might have ended, but the traces had not disappeared. Nothing she lived through was ever finally over” (264). She then picks up a copy of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, “the only book she had kept with her from her student days” (JG 264-265), and

settled down to read the poems again, pulled in by a music of feelings that had remained set in print, even as the pages had yellowed and turned brittle. A muse of feelings she thought she had forgotten, more than words, more than poetry, returning to the spaces inside her body its silent and eloquent touch. For the moment, standing again before Suyin’s bedroom door and listening to the golden echoes in her daughter’s breathing, she did not ask for more. (JG 265)

At one level, the conclusion of *Joss and Gold* signals a departure from the mother-daughter narratives in Asian American women’s writing where (in the case of Amy Tan’s *Joy Luck Club*) the Chinese mother stands for a “radical difference,” or “an inherited core of Chineseness” that the Chinese American daughter must in some way abject or reconcile with her American subjectivity so that the daughter can “share with other Americans an enriching access to a matrilineal heritage of protofeminist individualism and enterprise” (Chu 168).

But instead of making the mother (Li An) contained or abjected by the daughter

(Suyin), Lim's novel creates a sentimental co-ordination of both Li An and Suyin, a co-ordination of maternal and feminine affection that is also critical of the official, masculine politics of cultural nationalism. In other words, the novel's conclusion is a conjunction of Rey Chow's understanding of the sentimental and Theodor Adorno's aesthetic theory. The relationship between Li An and Suyin embodies a kind of sentimental longing and fulfillment that Rey Chow observes in East Asian films, and that Theodor Adorno points out in his discussion of artworks, figurative language, and historical conditions.

The sentimental, for Rey Chow, is

an inclination or a disposition toward making compromises and toward making-do with even – and especially – that which is oppressive and unbearable. [...] the sentimental is rather about what keeps and preserves, what holds things together. For this reason, the sentimental is perhaps best described as a mood of endurance, a mode whose contours tend to remain fuzzy rather than sharply delineated and whose effects may more easily be apprehended as (a prevailing) tone. (18, original emphasis)

This mood or mode of endurance is a double-edged sword, however, because on one hand "as *wenqing* or accommodation, the sentimental is ultimately about being accommodating and being accommodated, about the delineation and elaboration of a comfortable/homely interiority" (Chow 19), but on the other hand "*at the heart of chinese sentimentalism lies the idealization of filiality,*" which "is not simply a matter of respecting one's biological or cultural elders but an age-old cultural apparatus for interpellating individuals into the hierarchy-conscious conduct of identifying with – and submitting to – whatever preexists them" (Chow 22, original emphasis). *Joss and Gold* stages an encounter between sentimentalism as the idealization of filiality and sentimentality as a mode of accommodation and perseverance through Li An's endurance and working through of cultural nationalism's patriarchal expectations. Certainly, Grandma Yeh's

concern with Suyin's retention of the Yeh family name, and the re-emergence of Chester and Henry into Suyin's life suggests that filial piety is an important part of how the novel positions its female characters with the larger social order in Singapore. But at no point does this accommodation — between Li An's sentimental and domestic circle of Suyin, Ellen, and Grandma Yeh with the dominant social order — create the worst-case situation where “the gravest problems [...] when the homely – what is inside – too, is revealed to be oppressive and unbearable – indeed, uninhabitable” (Chow 19). Chester's unexpected visit to Singapore, Grandma Yeh's death, and Henry's return into Suyin's life, all these events do not cause the life Li An, Suyin, and Ellen have built for themselves to become unbearable or uninhabitable. Of course, Li An realizes that even if, “for the moment” (JG 265), there is a close connection (symbolized by the “golden echoes” of her daughter's breathing that resonates with both Li An's imagination and her physical body) between her and her daughter, that may change depending on how Suyin answers the questions regarding her dual patrimony from Chester and Henry. But the novel's conclusion registers this concern while making it recede into the background; instead, what is foregrounded is a sentimental retracing of Li An's life, her “marriage, love, whatever she shared with Henry or Chester [...] Nothing she lived through was ever finally over.” This in turn triggers a literary turn to Li An's sentimental musings — as she reads the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, she experiences “a music of feelings that had remained set in print, even as the pages had yellowed and turned brittle. A muse of feelings she thought she had forgotten, more than words, more than poetry, returning to the spaces inside her body its silent and eloquent touch” (JG 265). This sequences of memories and sensations — Suyin's breathing, Li An's memories of her love and life with Chester and Henry, and finally the buried-but-unforgotten sensations of literary

reading — can be read as the artistic process of longing, neediness, fulfillment and change that emerges out of an artwork's engagement with the historical conditions of its creation. "There is no valid artwork without longing," Theodor Adorno proposes, but also

That by which they transcend longing, however, is the neediness inscribed as a figure in the historically existing. By retracing this figure, they are not only more than what simply exists but participate in objective truth to the extent that what is in need summons its fulfillment and change. (*Aesthetic Theory* 132)

Suyin, born of the historically existing encounter between Li An and Chester, the Chinese Malaysian woman and the white American anthropologist, is a figure who inscribes the neediness — the necessity — of racial and cultural mixing in the postcolonial world, an objective truth that is vehemently denied or rejected by masculine authority and cultural nationalism.

Through Suyin, Li An fulfills her role as woman and mother in the shadow of Malaysian and Singaporean strictures about women's offspring; Suyin herself can be read as a figure for potential change as she plays the role of Madam White Snake, which gradually makes her self-consciousness of her difference from mainstream Chinese Singaporean society but simultaneously awakens her nascent physical and sexual sensibilities. The way Lim's novel emphasizes in its last section Suyin's physical growth and maturation and Li An's rediscovery of her sensual love of literary language may certainly be read as part of a female *bildungsroman*, but, more importantly, it evinces what Horkheimer describes as the "felt opposition" between the "positive form[s]" of "sexual love" and "maternal care" where "the growth and happiness of the other are willed in such unions" (114). Both the tactile and the emotional senses of "felt" are operative here for Li An and Suyin, and in its sensuality we can also see how Lim's

novel stages a contrapuntal critique of official nationalism's ideas of race and culture without completely eschewing the idea of the nation as a political and cultural community. As Edward Said reminds us, contrapuntal reading requires "a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (51). The sentimental endurance expressed in Li An's struggle against a patriarchal society becomes more than a personal triumph over an authoritarian and chauvinistic national formation; it is also an exposition of how an alternative and equally legitimate community of women can exist within the national framework without acceding to the demands of racial, cultural, and linguistic purity as grounds for inclusion within the nation.

* * *

AFTERWORD

When I delivered a shortened version of my chapter on Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* as a talk, one commentator expressed — in a well-meaning manner — that my project of revisiting or reimagining national consciousness in contemporary literature seemed anachronistic for the twenty-first century. This commentator unwittingly confirmed my argument that what we see in the writing of Kazuo Ishiguro, Derek Walcott, and Shirley Geok-lin Lim is precisely nationalism as a residual form of political consciousness and cultural critique, formed within and also contesting the global cultural, economic, and demographic flows that characterize our postcolonial, postmodern world. As Neil Lazarus argues, it is necessary to correct the view that

'our' [i.e. Western or European] nationalisms — to the extent that they become visible at all as objects of inquiry — are typically classes as finished projects and are taken to have had benign effects: modernizing, unifying, democratizing. 'Their' [i.e. Third World or postcolonial] supposedly still unfolding nationalisms, on the other hand, are categorized under the rubrics of atavism, anarchy, irrationality, and power-mongering. (*Nationalism and Cultural Practice*, 69)

Lazarus's parenthetical statement that nationalism in the West seldom seems to deserve rigorous scrutiny perhaps explains why my commentator felt my project seemed out of time and place for the North American academy.

A residual or deliberately anachronistic approach to nationalism is pertinent to both our contemporary geopolitical situation and our current academic dialogues. To reiterate my conceptualization of nationalism in this project: nationalism creates identity positions for the people in its imagined community and marks out a territory governed by a sovereign state for this people, but these identities and territories must also be reckoned within an ongoing process of political and cultural negotiation between the people and the state, and between its national self-image and others adjacent or related

to it. It is when official nationalism hypostatizes or objectifies identities and territories in terms of race, language, or religion, and takes up defensive and exclusionary measures against perceived threats to the “purity” of the nation — whether these threats are actual or symbolic — that nationalism departs from its liberating promise and shades into nativism and patriotism. This can occur both in postcolonial countries as well as the advanced, industrialized countries of the West, because the objectification of national, ethnic, or cultural identities, while apparently resisting globalization, actually goes hand-in-glove with global capital, whose post-Fordist model of accumulation and reproduction forms the dominant logic of our lived experience. Raymond Williams, in his theorization of the relationship between residual and dominant cultural elements, describes the paradox of residual nationalism *vis-à-vis* global capital and official nationalism:

A residual cultural element is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but some part of it, some version of it [...] will in the most cases have had to be incorporated if the effective dominant culture is to make sense in these areas. Moreover, at certain points the dominant culture cannot allow too much residual experience and practice outside itself, at least without risk. It is in the incorporation of the actively residual [...] that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident. (123)

The residual, then, is incorporated in a piecemeal fashion by the dominant, but this incorporation is not absolute, because “in the subsequent default of a particular phase of a dominant culture there is then a reaching back” to those elements of the residual culture that “represent areas of human experience, aspiration, and achievement which dominant culture neglects” (123-124). Similarly, Frantz Fanon’s argument that a country that wishes to “avoid regression” must take “a rapid step” from “national consciousness to political and social consciousness” (203) suggests that national consciousness remains

a residual and salient part of a larger political and social consciousness without withering away – “it is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately only the source of all culture” (247-248).

The dominant globalization of culture that objectifies nationalism into a monolithic and homogeneous identity suffers a “default” or interruption in the work of Ishiguro, Walcott, and Lim; they seize the “risk” that the dominant culture takes by trying to incorporate parts of residual culture, and they work through the symbols and figures of the residual in order to reach back to the national consciousness of “human experience, aspiration, and achievement” inherent within these figures. They show, through their literary reconfigurations of apparently naturalized and objectified concepts such as “national heritage,” “diasporic hybridity,” and “coercive mimeticism,” that cultural concepts are produced through the relation of national and inter- or transnational consciousness, and that these concepts are narrated, negotiated, and hence open to, perhaps even demand, redefinition over time. If national consciousness and transnational culture are not opposed but intertwined and mutually constitutive, then the question of how we understand the transnational through literary representations of the national becomes something that deserves inquiry. I am particularly interested in the novels of Amitav Ghosh, who is celebrated as a writer of “world literature” and someone who offers historical-realist and down-to-earth depictions everyday life in remote geographical locations. I wish to rethink, by way of Ghosh’s fiction, what Timothy Brennan calls “the national longing for form,” which (in his view) is expressed in the contemporary novel, which, in turn, is seen as a form of “overt cosmopolitanism [...] that perfectly imagines the novel’s obsessive nation-centeredness and its imperial

(that is, universalizing) origins" (46, 64). But I sense that a "global longing for form" is at work in Ghosh's fiction, a longing that points towards rethinking the form of realism and the historical-realist novel itself, or what Georg Lukacs calls a critical realism that examines how "the ideal of totality" — in Ghosh's case, the contemporary world-system implicit in the category of "world literature" — "in art can never, of course, be more than a guiding principle, applied to a particular segment of life; it can never be more than an approximation to totality" (100). The degree to which nationalism — as the congruence or negotiated accord of politics and culture within a community — plays an important role in Ghosh's apparently cosmopolitan and historical-realist fiction is something I wish to explore in the next stage of this project, for it would problematize and rethink the connection between world literature's "overt cosmopolitanism" and "obsessive nation-centeredness" that Brennan criticizes as being complicit with imperialism.

* * *

WORKS CITED

- Adelman, Gary. "Double on the Rocks: Ishiguro's Unconsoled." *Critique* 42.2(2001):166-179.
- Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. and ed. Robery Hullot-Kentor. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- . "Beethoven's Late Style." *Can One Live After Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Rodney Livingstone, et al. Stanford, CA: Stanford U P, 2003. 295-298.
- . "Culture and Administration." *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London: Routledge, 2001. 107-131.
- . "Cultural Criticism and Society." *The Adorno Reader*. Ed. Brian O'Connor. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 195-210.
- . "The Essay as Form." *The Adorno Reader*. Ed. Brian O'Connor. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 91-111.
- . *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 2005.
- . "Negative Dialectics and the Possibility of Philosophy." *The Adorno Reader*. Ed. Brian O'Connor. Trans. E. B. Ashton. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 54-78.
- Ahmad, Aijaz. "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'". *Social Text* 17(Autumn 1987): 3-25.
- Alatas, Syed Hussein. *The Myth of The Lazy Native : A Study of The Image of The Malays, Filipinos and Javanese From The 16th to The 20th century and Its function in The Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London : F. Cass, 1977.

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "Patriotism and its Futures." *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 158-177.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. "Cosmopolitan Reading." *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*. Ed. Vinay Dharwadker. London: Routledge, 2001. 197-227.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Balibar, Etienne. "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." *Becoming National: A Reader*. Ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny. New York: Oxford U P, 1996. 132-149.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Allegory and Trauerspiel." *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. London: New Left Books, 1977. 159-235.
- . "Theses on The Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 253-264.
- Bhabha, Homi. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi Bhabha. London/New York: Routledge, 1990. 291-322.
- Brennan, Timothy. "The National Longing for Form." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 44-70.
- Breslin, Paul. *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001.
- Brown, David. *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*. London / New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Burnett, Paula. "Appropriating Heirlooms: The Fortunate Traveler's Intertext." *Derek*

- Walcott: *Politics and Poetics*. Gainesville, FL: U P of Florida, 2000. 175-207.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 1993.
- Chicago Cultural Studies Group. "Critical Multiculturalism." *Critical Inquiry* 18.3(Spring 1992): 530-555.
- Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia U P, 2002.
- . *Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility*. New York: Columbia U P, 2007.
- Chu, Patricia P. *Assimilating Asians: Gendered Strategies of Authorship in Asian America*. Durham, NC: Duke U P, 2000.
- Chua, Beng Huat. "Racial-Singaporeans: Absence after the Hyphen." In *Southeast Asian Identities: Culture and the Politics of Representation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand*. Ed. Joel S. Kahn. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 28-50.
- Clifford, James. "Introduction: The Pure Products Go Crazy." *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1988. 1-17.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The Global in the Local." *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*. Ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. 21-45.
- Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 2004.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1968.

- Gellner, Ernst. "Nations and Nationalism." *Nations and Identities: Classic Readings*. Ed. Vincent P. Pecora. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 292-308.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. New York: Columbia U P, 1996.
- . *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell U P, 1992.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1993.
- Goyal, Yogita. "Theorizing Africa in Black Diaspora Studies: Caryl Phillips' Crossing the River." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*. 12.1(2003): 5-38.
- Gunn, Giles. "Introduction: Globalizing Literary Studies." *PMLA* 116(1):2001. 16-31.
- Haggas, Carol. Review of *Joss and Gold*. *Booklist* 97.1(August 2001). 2087.
- Hall, Stuart. "Conclusion: The Multi-cultural Question." *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, "Transruptions"*. Ed. Barnor Hesse. London: Zed Books, 2000. 209-241.
- . "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity : community, culture, difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London : Lawrence & Wishart, 1990. 222-237
- . "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*. Ed. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl. Jamaica: U of the West Indies Press, 2001. 24-39.
- Hesse, Barnor. "Introduction: Un/Settled Multiculturalisms." *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, "Transruptions"*. Ed. Barnor Hesse. London: Zed Books, 2000. 1- 30.
- Horkheimer, Max. "Authority and the Family." *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York: Continuum Press, 1995. 47-128.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. London: Vintage, 1990.

---. *The Unconsoled*. London: Vintage, 1996.

Ishiguro, Kazuo and Kenzaburo Oe. "The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation."

Japan in the World. Ed. Harry Harootunian and Masao Miyoshi. Durham, NC:

Duke U P, 1993. 163-176.

Jaggi, Maya. "Kazuo Ishiguro with Maya Jaggi." *Writing Across Worlds: Contemporary*

riters Talk. Ed. Susheila Nasta. London: Routledge, 2004. 159-170.

James, Louis. *Caribbean Literature in English*. London: Longman, 1999.

U P, 1992.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*.

Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Jameson, Fredric. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multi-national Capitalism."

Social Text 15:1986. 65-87.

Jay, Martin. *Adorno*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1984.

Judt, Tony. "The Rootless Cosmopolitan: Edward Said." *The Nation*, Jul 19, 2004.

<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040719/judt> (accessed Oct 15, 2007).

Jusdanis, Gregory. *The Necessary Nation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 2001.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. "Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation." *Colonial*

Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura

Chrisman. New York: Columbia U P, 1994. 376-391.

Keen, Suzanne. *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction*. Toronto: U of

Toronto P, 2001.

King, Bruce. *The Internationalization of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.

- . "The New Internationalism: Shiva Naipaul, Salman rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo, and Kazuo Ishiguro." *The British and Irish Novel since 1960*. Ed. James Acheson. London: MacMillan, 1991. 192-211.
- Krider, Dylan Otto. "Rooted in a Small Space: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *Kenyon Review* 20.2 (Spring 1998):146-154.
- Kumar, Amitava, ed. "Introduction." *World Bank Literature*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2003. xvii – xxxiii.
- Lamming, George. "Concepts of the Caribbean." *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. Ed. Frank Birbalsingh. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 1-14.
- Lazarus, Neil. *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U P, 1999.
- . "Transnationalism and the Alleged Death of the Nation-State." *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*. Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, et al. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 28-48.
- Leavis, F. R. "'English,' Unrest, and Continuity." *Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion, and Social Hope*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972. 103-133.
- Leong, Liew Geok. Afterword. *Joss and Gold*. By Shirley Geok-lin Lim. New York: Feminist Press, 2001.
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "Asians in Anglo-American Feminism: Reciprocity and Resistance." *Writing S.E./Asia in English: Against the Grain: Focus on Asian English-language Literature*. London: Skoob Books, 1994. 31-44.
- . *Joss and Gold*. New York: Feminist Press, 2001.
- . "Semiotics, Experience and the Material Self: an Inquiry into the Subject of the

- Contemporary Asian Woman Writer." *Writing South East / Asia in English: Against the Grain, Focus on Asian English-language Literature*. London: Skoob Books, 1994. 8-30.
- Lukacs, Georg. *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
- Mauzy, Diane. "Malay Political Hegemony and 'Coercive Consociationalism'." *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts*. Ed. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary. London/New York: Routledge, 1991. 106-127.
- Nazareth, Peter. Review of *Joss and Gold*. *World Literature Today* 76.1(Winter 2002).138-139.
- Publishers Weekly*. Review of *Joss and Gold*. August 27, 2001. 52.
- Purushotam, Nirmala. "Women and Knowledge/Power: Notes on the Singaporean Dilemma." *Imagining Singapore*. Ed. Kah Choon Ban, Anne Pakir, and Chee Kiong Tong. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2004. 328-364.
- Premnath, Gautam. *Arguments with Nationalism in the Fiction of the Indian Diaspora*. Diss. Brown U, 2003. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2003. 3087330.
- . "The Weak Sovereignty of the Postcolonial Nation-State." *World Bank Literature*. Ed. Amitava Kumar. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 253-264.
- Puri, Shalini. *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism, and Cultural Hybridity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Quan, Shirley N. Review of *Joss and Gold*. *Library Journal* August 2001. 52.
- Robbins, Bruce. "Very Busy Just Now: Globalization and Harriedness in Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*." *Comparative Literature* 53.4(2001):426-41.

- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
- . "Traveling Theory Reconsidered." *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 2000. 436-452.
- Savory, Elaine. "Anglophone Caribbean Literature." *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature Volume 2*. Ed. F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2004. 711-758.
- Sim, Wai-chew. "Kazuo Ishiguro." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 25.1(2005):80-115.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *The Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U P, 1999. 112-197.
- Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004.
- Stevenson, Randall. *The Last of England?* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Szeman, Imre. *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism, and the Nation*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins U P, 2003.
- Tölölyan, Khachig. "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface." *Diaspora* 1.1(1991): 3-7.
- . "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment." *Diaspora* 5.1(1996): 3-36.
- Walcott, Derek. *Another Life*. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982. 2nd ed.
- . "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory." *What the Twilight Says: Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. 65-84.
- . "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 16(1):1974. 3-13.
- . "The Fortunate Traveller." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and

- Giroux, 1986. 456-463.
- . "Meanings." *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*. Comp. and ed. Robert D. Hamner. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1993. 45-50.
- . "The Muse of History." *What the Twilight Says: Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. 36-64.
- . "To Return to the Trees." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986. 339-341.
- . "The Schooner *Flight*." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986. 345-361.
- . "Sea Grapes." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986. 297.
- . "The Season of Phantasmal Peace." *Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986. 464-465.
- . "Society and the Artist." *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*. Comp. and ed. Robert D. Hamner. Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1993. 15-17.
- Walkowitz, Rebecca. *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation*. New York: Columbia U P, 2006.
- . "Ishiguro's Floating Worlds." *English Literary History* 68(2001):1049-1076.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1977.
- Wood, James. "The Unconsoled." Rev. of *The Unconsoled* by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The New Republic* Oct 16, 2000. 43-49.
- Vorda, Allan and Kim Herzinger. "Stuck on the Margins: An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro." *Face to Face: Interviews with Contemporary Novelists*. Ed. Allan Vorda. Houston, TX: Rice U P, 1993. 1-35.

Zizek, Slavoj. "Multiculturalism, or, the Logic of Multinational Capitalism". *New Left Review* 225(Sep-Oct 1997):28-51.