Performative Metaphors in Caribbean and Ethnic Canadian Writing

by

Heike Helene Härting
B.A. (Grundstudium), Free University of Berlin, 1987
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Supervisor: Dr. Smaro Kamboureli

ABSTRACT

Postcolonial theorists tend to read metaphor generally as a trope of power that synthesizes its inherently binary structure of tenor and vehicle to produce totalizing meanings. Although some critics have emphasized the importance of metaphor in postcolonial and Canadian studies, theorists like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak tend to approach metaphor either in exclusively structuralist or in predominantly deconstructivist terms. In contrast to these approaches, this study examines how texts from different postcolonial traditions of writing reconfigure metaphor for political and cultural reasons. It reads metaphor as a trope of cultural crisis that produces contiguous histories and cross-cultural identities that contest clearly defined national boundaries. While it is impossible to resist metaphor's self-deconstructive tendencies, this project shows that we can resist and rearticulate its oppressive effects by conceptualizing metaphor's operative modes in performative and postcolonial terms.

Performative metaphors generate, while keeping in suspense, the social and psychological constraints that impact on the construction of identity. The cultural significance of performative metaphors lies in their potential to replace the metaphoric binary structure of vehicle and tenor with metaphor's ability to reiterate and destabilize dominant discourses of race, gender, and nationalism. In the context of ethnic Canadian and Caribbean writing, performative metaphors foreground questions of naming, memory, and cultural translation; they also challenge those rhetorical and literary forms through which cultural and national identities are imagined and represented in "authentic" and "original" terms. A performative understanding of metaphor, as developed in this dissertation, articulates an ethical imperative that, first, accounts for the physical and representational violence enacted on the subaltern body and, second, acknowledges the ways in which subaltern subjects produce cultural knowledge with a difference.

Methodologically, this study combines feminist theories of performativity with postcolonial theory, Caribbean and Canadian literary criticism. It discusses Judith Butler's theory of performativity in the context of ethnic Canadian historiographical writing, Caribbean performance and epic poetry. A critical examination of texts by Derek Walcott, David Dabydeen, Austin Clarke, M.G. Vassanji, and Sky Lee demonstrates that metaphor is one of the most important tools for a postcolonial critique of identity and nation formation.

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Preface

In its early stages I conceptualized my project as a comparative study of the uses and functions of metaphor in Caribbean and ethnic Canadian texts. In the course of my research, however, I have found that a comparative approach to metaphor leads me towards a systematic reading of metaphor that enumerates and classifies metaphors according to specific postcolonial experiences and issues. Although a systematic approach to metaphor can be useful for establishing common themes in different texts, it also generates reductive readings and elides a discussion of the ways in which texts differ from one another. Margaret Atwood's concept of "survival" and Northrop Frye's notion of "the garrison mentality" certainly contributed to decolonizing Canadian literature and making it an independent academic discipline at a time when the Canadian government encouraged the artistic search for specific Canadian national sensibilities. Atwood's and Frye's metaphors, however, systematize and unify Canadian literatures in ways that can account neither for the cultural and formal complexities of these texts nor for the ways in which multicultural Canadian writing challenges cohesive practices of national and cultural representation. As far as it is possible, therefore, my study avoids a systematic reading of metaphor. Instead, I am interested in examining the ways in which different cultural and historical contexts as well as literary traditions change the operative modes of metaphor in postcolonial texts. Rather than emphasising the unifying effects of metaphor, the texts I discuss in my study suggest that metaphor brings to crisis cultural norms and symbolically produces contiguous cultural histories and cross-cultural identities that are not restricted by but contest clearly defined national and geographical boundaries.

Having abandoned a conventional comparative approach, I have often been guided and, more often, misguided by the volatility of metaphor itself, by the impossibility of imposing authorial control on metaphor. I am not implying here that my readings of metaphor are arbitrary and without direction: rather, I am pointing to the limits and

subjective nature of my readings. In many ways, the methodology of my study is determined by the selection of texts and the theoretical approach I bring to my readings of these texts. Although the title of my study distinguishes between Caribbean and ethnic Canadian writing, this distinction is, in part, inappropriate. For example, Austin Clarke belongs to both literatures, while such writers as David Dabydeen and M.G. Vassanji do not properly fit into either of them. Yet, to different degrees, all of the authors I discuss write from a diasporic perspective that underscores experiences of migration and racist violence, cultural displacement, the "impurity" of cultural origins, and the rearticulation of national belonging in cross-cultural terms. It is through these multiple perspectives that I think of these Caribbean and ethnic Canadian authors to be postcolonial in the widest sense of the term. Since I do not want to restrict the cultural and artistic particularities of their texts to what must necessarily be a presumptuous notion of a specific Canadian or Caribbean identity on my part, I discuss their differences by taking into account their particular uses of metaphors.

To a large extent, the emphasis diasporic texts put on hybrid formations of cultural and national identity predetermines the unconventional ways in which metaphors operate in these texts. In texts, however, that deal with processes of decolonization and the historical struggle of defining a national consciousness independent of colonial rule, metaphor tends to operate in its received form as a trope of substitution and identity. For example, Leopold Senghor's and Aimé Césaire's *négritude* poetry frequently employs metaphor as a trope that reverses and rewrites disdainful colonial stereotypes of the black body and black identity. Here the authors reappropriate metaphor as a political tool to forge a self-assertive consciousness of national independence. Yet, while metaphor may be used for emancipatory political ends, its dialectical and binary modes of operation are still in place. Such contradictions, far from undermining my theoretical premises, help demonstrate the fact that metaphors operate differently in different political, historical, and national contexts. The diasporic texts I examine in my study, then, tend to use metaphor in less

conventional ways, precisely because they emphasize the heterogeneity and instability of national and cultural identities.[1]

Apart from its self-subversive properties, which mar a comparative reading practice of the trope, metaphor's entanglement in various theoretical discourses poses a number of methodological problems when examined through a postcolonial perspective. My use of post-structuralist and feminist theories may call forth reservations as to what extent I employ Western theories to read postcolonial texts through the very cultural and political traditions these texts contest. As such theorists as Aijaz Ahmad, Benita Parry, and Arif Dirlik have pointed out, postcolonial critics who rely on post-structuralist and deconstructivist theories sometimes tend to disregard the work of non-Western philosophers, historians, and cultural theorists. They also neglect a radical political critique of the material conditions that perpetuate the historically grown political and economic dependence of former colonial countries on the West. In addition to Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, who have been the main targets of such a critique, other critics, such as Bart Moore-Gilbert, R. Radhakrishnan, and Prakash Gyan, have suggested fruitful ways in which to combine postcolonial and post-structuralist genealogies of the dominant narratives of Western Enlightenment, Reason, and Progress. My study critically situates itself within the second group of critics.

To avoid imposing my theoretical views on the texts, I develop each of my readings from one or more examples of the ways in which different postcolonial texts employ metaphor. More specifically, I try to develop and exemplify the thematic and theoretical issues of a chapter through a reading of specific metaphors taken from texts other than those I discuss in that chapter. In this way I want to show that my study of metaphor is not a formal or text-immanent exercise that separates the aesthetics of a text from its politics. Instead, I want to emphasize that my study brings together the practice and theory of reading metaphor as a trope that disrupts normative discourses of national and cultural identity formation. For this reason, I depart from a number of theoretical trajectories that

both help rearticulating metaphor in performative and postcolonial terms and establish a theoretical dialogue between various Caribbean writers and critics and Western post-structuralist and feminist theorists. At various moments, all of my chapters are haunted by metaphor's ability to destabilize and disintegrate theoretical arguments. Yet, to examine the operative modes of metaphor, rather than specific metaphors, in a postcolonial context requires that I draw from what appears to be an incompatible selection of theoretical texts. Conceptualized as a postcolonial study of metaphor, my project cannot rely on reading metaphor exclusively through dominant theoretical texts, but it must also draw on the critical essays of such Caribbean writers and thinkers as Derek Walcott, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, and Wilson Harris. Many of the difficulties of charting my way through the maze of metaphor also derive from the fact that so far only a few postcolonial critics have engaged in examining the ways in which postcolonial writers reconfigure the operative modes of metaphor as a part of their narrative strategies. While the subject of my study necessarily leaves my readings incomplete and sometimes fragmented, I believe that the unusual juxtaposition of theorists and writers opens up questions as well as new ways of reading postcolonial texts and thinking through metaphor.

My study is divided into an introduction, four main parts, and a brief conclusion. My introduction, "The Predicament of Metaphor: Theoretical Perspectives," has two purposes. First, it outlines some of the dominant ways in which literary critics have conceptualized metaphor and against which I situate my reading of metaphor. Second, it provides a brief theoretical genealogy of the terms performance, the performative, and performativity as they pertain to my study. Part One of my study, "Performative Metaphors," consists of four chapters that discuss the different theoretical trajectories through which I define my notion of performative metaphors. In order to ground my theoretical approach in a postcolonial practice of writing, my first chapter, "The Word and the Sound: Performance, Performativity, and their Discontents," reads the concept of

performativity through the traditions of Caribbean performance poetry. I argue that both of these cultural practices can be read together in interesting ways, for they both engage in exposing and misappropriating normative discourses of history and cultural identity. The second chapter, "Metaphor and Temporality: Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Wilson Harris," discusses Derrida's seminal essay on metaphor, "White Mythology," in order to argue that the various effects of referential crises and detours Derrida attributes to metaphor are reiterations of metaphor that open the trope towards its own historicity. The association of metaphor with time, its circulation in different historical discourses of power, not only suggests that the trope operates performatively through reiteration and citationality, but it also allows me to link Derrida's notion of metaphor with that of Wilson Harris. In my discussion of Derrida and Harris I ask how we can identify the ways in which metaphor acts as a discourse of power, and how metaphorical inscriptions can be resignified in productive ways. In order to examine the marginalized position metaphor seems to occupy in dominant discourses of postcolonial theory, chapter three, "Metaphor and Homi Bhabha," explores Bhabha's notions of nation narration and cultural difference. I argue that both of these concepts are predicated on Bhabha's Jakobsonian understanding of the trope. In particular, I attempt to contest the ways in which Bhabha excludes the destabilizing effects of metaphor from what he describes as the performativity of the nation, the continuous process in which culturally marginalized groups disrupt and reconfigure dominant notions of nationhood. In contrast to Bhabha, Spivak, as a deconstructivist and postcolonial theorist, assigns metaphor a central position in the discourses of nation formation and cultural identification. Chapter four, "Metaphor, Catachresis, and Postcolonial Translation: Gayatri Spivak," discusses the ways in which Spivak develops Derrida's argument that catachresis can be read as a disruptive configuration of metaphor that intervenes into normative discourses of power. I find Spivak's theory of catachresis and postcolonial translation to be crucial, for it coincides with Butler's use of catachresis as a political and performative practice that resignifies received social norms and relationships.

In this sense, a reading of Spivak helps me situate my notion of performative metaphors more squarely in a postcolonial context.

While Part One of my study establishes the theoretical contexts in which I read metaphor, the following three parts (chapters five to ten) focus on specific texts and their particular use of metaphor. Although each Part traces a specific issue, in all of them I employ a genealogical reading practice of metaphor. Specifically, I examine the ways in which metaphor falsely becomes and operates as a normative discourse of power through reiteration over time. Part Two, "Performing the Body," consists of chapters five and six and deals with the ways in which metaphor participates in and undermines cultural and racist constructions of the body. Chapter five, "David Dabydeen's *The Intended*: Metaphorical Configurations of Cultural and Racial Invisibility," and chapter six, "Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*: Genealogy, Ethnicity, and Cultural Translation," investigate both the different languages of cultural resistance in Dabydeen's and Lee's novels and the ways in which performative metaphors can be reappropriated by normative discourses of cultural identity. Part Three, "Performing the Nation," is divided into chapters seven and eight and examines the controversial role of performative metaphors in both Caribbean and multicultural Canadian discourses of national belonging. Chapter seven, "Derek Walcott's *Omeros*: Caribbean Historiography, Naming, and the Construction of Gender," and chapter eight, "Austin Clarke's *The Origin of Waves*: Translating Origins and Performative Metaphors," discuss the ways in which culturally specific metaphors not only operate as but produce gendered and cross-cultural discourses of history and the nation. Part Four, "Of Signs and Books: Performative Metaphors, Cultural Transfiguration, and Historiography," addresses the ways in which metaphor forestalls unequivocal forms of cultural representation. This Part contains chapter nine, "Dabydeen's *Turner*: The Politics of Cultural Transfiguration," and chapter ten, "M.G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*: Metaphor and Historiography." Both of these chapters argue that Dabydeen's and Vassanji's texts dramatize metaphor in self-reflexive and

reiterative ways, suggesting that metaphorical operations do not depend on the dialectical relationship between tenor and vehicle. Instead, they suggest, like many of the other texts I examine, that metaphor, when read in performative terms, not only enables us to articulate the contiguity of imperial history and contemporary concepts of the nation, but it also opens new ways in which to conceptualize cultural identity and metaphor itself. Rather than ascribing a cohesive cultural identity, a performative metaphor acts as a trope of cultural and representational crisis and compels us to think identity not as some natural or universal human property but as a discursively produced and multifaceted network of power relations.

Introduction

The Predicament of Metaphor: Theoretical Perspectives

> But an idea or a notion, when unencumbered and undisguised, is no easier to get hold of than one of those oiled and naked thieves who infest the railway carriages of India. Indeed an idea, or a notion, like the physicist's ultimate particles and rays, is only known by what it does. Apart from its dress or other signs it is not identifiable.
>
> I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric.*
> (5)

"Performative Metaphors in Caribbean and Ethnic Canadian Writing" is a study that examines and produces a variety of readings of the ways in which contemporary Caribbean fiction and poetry as well as ethnic Canadian fiction employ metaphor in specific cultural and historical contexts. I argue that metaphors can be read as performative tropes insofar as they are discursively produced and mediate the founding assumptions of the discourses of power and identity that give rise to them. The epigraph from I.A. Richards' influential study of metaphor, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), illustrates that theories of metaphor cannot but invent their own explanatory metaphors. More importantly, Richards' metaphorical juxtaposition of an elusive truth, embodied in his racist image of a naked thief in India--Britain's oldest and most prized colonial territory--, with the notion of metaphor as a garment suggests that received theories of metaphor emerge from or are at least inflected by discourses of race and sexuality.

Edward Said and Homi Bhabha have convincingly argued that metaphor, as is used above by Richards, largely functions as an instrument of power that objectifies differences of race, sex, and culture as symbolic vehicles of representation. This use of metaphor helps consolidate the relationship between imperial Self and colonized Other. Yet few postcolonial critics have theorized metaphor in ways that suggest productive and empowering uses of metaphor in the discourses of cultural and national identity formation. This relative absence of postcolonial studies of metaphor has to do, in part, with the

various theoretical predicaments metaphor poses. Metaphor is both an ideologically invested trope of power that imparts identity and a trope of infinitely overdetermined and self-deconstructive meanings. Further, in Western history and philosophy, as Jacques Derrida has argued, metaphor invariably works through a dialectical movement that synthesizes the two structural elements that form metaphor, namely metaphor's vehicle (the figure or word of expression) and the tenor (the underlying idea or what the vehicle is compared to). Through its conventional operative modes of substitution, resemblance, and analogy, metaphor often reinstates what it sets out to criticize. For example, when in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* Ulysses refers to "power" as "an universal wolf" (1.3. 120-21), he forms an analogy between "power" and "wolf" based on the similarity between greed, unruliness, and predatory behavior associated with both nouns. In Ulysses' speech of degrees, the metaphor of the "universal wolf" identifies "power" with "wolf" to signify the devastating consequences that result from the loss of given social hierarchies. In other words, the metaphorical process of identification substitutes the particular meanings of "power" and "wolf" in favor of a third meaning that refers to more than can be assigned to either term.

The language of postcolonial discourse provides yet another example of the ways in which metaphor tends to reinstate what it sets out to criticize. Although not readily identifiable as a metaphor, in a number of theoretical texts on postcolonialism, the term "hybridity" functions as a metaphor for the subversive effects of colonial mimicry enacted by the colonized as, for example, Homi Bhabha understands it.[2] To articulate "hybridity" as a metaphor of colonial subversion requires that the term undergo a conceptual shift from its association with nineteenth century pseudo-scientific discourses of race to cultural discourses of identity formation. Yet, regardless of whether the term refers to biologically reductive forms of identity or to emancipatory cultural concepts of identity, in both cases "hybridity" emphasizes difference and deviation from implicit norms. While a postcolonial use of "hybridity" dismantles the term's binary inscriptions of racial purity and

contamination, it also reinstates the term's operative modes of difference and deviation. As other studies of metaphor, my study cannot avoid this theoretical trap. Yet, in contrast to such postcolonial studies of metaphor as Sylvia Söderlind's *Margin/Alias*, I wish to argue that the theoretical dilemmas of metaphor, read in a certain way, can point to a crisis of meaning that destabilizes rather than endorses holistic concepts of identity.

My study departs from two general theoretical observations. First, if, as various studies of colonial discourse analysis illustrate,[3] metaphor functions as a rhetorical means of power that constructs dominant narratives of empire, race, and the nation, metaphor also operates discursively and destabilizes the very discourses it seeks to uphold. Given metaphor's crucial historical role in the construction of cultural representations of imperial Self and colonial Other, we need to account for the ways in which contemporary postcolonial texts appropriate and rearticulate the trope's oppressive effects in productive and unexpected ways. Reading metaphor as a discourse of power, however, requires that we discuss the trope through a theoretical apparatus that helps elucidate the often contradictory dynamics of power. For this reason, Judith Butler's theory of performativity offers a useful theoretical framework for my study of metaphor, for it departs from and critically examines the Foucaultian notion that no process of identity formation can take place outside the restrictions of power. If metaphor participates in the process of identity formation, we may say that metaphor also operates from within the constraints of power, that is, from within its own history of production. A performative approach to metaphor, I wish to suggest, enables us to rearticulate the oppressive effects of metaphor in productive ways. As a theory of identity formation that links the technologies of power with the complex practices of performativity, Butler's theory opens a number of helpful perspectives through which to examine the ways in which specific ethnic Canadian and Caribbean texts situate themselves within, while mediating cultural and national discourses of power and identity through metaphor.

My second consideration is that postcolonial theories often employ tropological readings to construct cultural identities. For example, Bhabha considers mimicry and metonymy to be the dominant tropes of cultural difference and hybridity; Gayatri Spivak theorizes catachresis as a representative trope of the postcolonial condition. Although neither Spivak nor Bhabha explicitly theorizes metaphor, their texts are informed by a respectively deconstructive and structuralist understanding of metaphor. Along with their work, my study is concerned with metaphor as a vehicle of cultural crisis. Yet, rather than foregrounding metaphor's tendency toward closure and synthesis of contradictions, I want to explore the ways in which certain metaphorical operations fail to establish an identification between tenor and vehicle. In the texts I examine, this failure brings to crisis the ways in which metaphor produces imperial and dominant forms of cultural representation. The discrepancy between tenor and vehicle, I want to argue, presents a crisis of meaning production that contests foundationalist concepts of identity without dispensing with the need for cultural identifications.

In the remainder of my Introduction, then, I discuss some of the theoretical contexts of my argument. My Introduction is divided into three sections. The first one outlines some of the intersections between the theoretical predicaments of metaphor and postcolonial writing practices as they pertain to the texts I examine in this study. A postcolonial reading of metaphor must explore the ways in which we can challenge the trope's totalizing tendencies. For this reason I am concerned more with a critical reading of the operative modes of metaphor and less with metaphor's structural elements, tenor and vehicle. The second section outlines the theoretical perspectives of my study. I focus on I.A. Richards' and Roman Jakobson's seminal theories of metaphor to establish a more precise idea of what I understand to have been the dominant configurations of metaphor before the English publication of Derrida's essay "White Mythology" in 1974. To recapitulate Richards' study is useful not only because it influenced such later theorists of metaphor as Max Blank, Paul Ricoeur, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson,[4] but also because it illustrates the ways in

which metaphor operates as a master trope. I also deal with Jakobson's structuralist construction of metaphor and metonymy in order to trace the ways in which his reading of metaphor still holds sway over postcolonial conceptualizations of metaphor. Against Richards' dialectical and Jakobson's bipolar concept of metaphor, my study develops a performative understanding of the operative modes of metaphor by drawing from postcolonial theory and criticism as well as from Butler's theory of performativity. In the third section of my Introduction I discuss some of the central aspects I take from Butler's theory and clarify the ways in which I distinguish between, and use, the terms performativity, performative, and performance. Rather than resolving the theoretical contradictions of metaphor, a performative understanding of metaphor seeks to develop critical reading practices of the ways in which metaphor is inscribed in different cultural contexts.

I. The Predicament of Metaphor in a Postcolonial Context

My study is neither concerned with a systematic classification of metaphors of cultural, ethnic, or racial identity nor with a formalist analysis of postcolonial texts. This should not imply that these aspects are not relevant in postcolonial studies. On the contrary, studies in colonial discourse analysis by such scholars as Henry Louis Gates Jr., Anne McClintock, and Sander L. Gilman[5] provide important insights into the ways in which metaphors of blackness operate either as master tropes of colonial discourses of race and white supremacy or as tropes of resistance. Regardless of their different political and theoretical interests, these studies are based on two classical notions of metaphor. First, metaphor functions as a totalizing trope of substitution. Second, by transferring the meaning of one thing, action, or quality to another, metaphor generates an identity between two distinct meanings. My inquiry into metaphor takes a different theoretical point of departure.

My interest in a critical study of metaphor in a postcolonial context derives from discussions I had with such writers as David Dabydeen, Hanif Kureishi, and Moyez.G. Vassanji. In these discussions I shared their concern about some critics' tendencies to locate the significance of postcolonial texts in their presumed cultural marginality. On the one hand, such a view diminishes the public acclaim these texts have gained over the last fifteen years. On the other, it overlooks that the various aesthetic and cultural concerns of many postcolonial texts resist readings based on such binarisms as margin versus center, Self versus Other. While I wish neither to underrate the importance of the politics of cultural marginality nor to reinstate the writer's voice as being authoritative, I do believe that a critical infatuation with cultural marginality can easily provoke reductive reading practices that ascribe to postcolonial texts a messianic and allegorical quality of oppression and liberation. Such reading practices risk neglecting a critical reading of postcolonial texts on their own formal and political terms. A postcolonial reading of metaphor, therefore,

must involve a critical inquiry into the often unacknowledged cultural values a critic attaches to her analytical vocabulary and critical approach. Indeed, to read postcolonial texts through received and presumably universal criteria of literary values continues, as Sarah Lawson Welsh rightly points out, a long history of racially inflected critical fallacies. In her essay "New Wine in New Bottles: the Critical Reception of West Indian Writing in Britain in the 1950s and Early 1960s," Welsh documents the general failure of white British critics to assess the novels by Caribbean writers who arrived and began publishing in London in the 1950s. Not only did critics project their own racist stereotypes when misjudging novels by such writers as Samuel Selvon and George Lamming as being exotic, infantile, and obscure, but they also underscored "[c]ultural and linguistic difference [. . .] in an attempt to emphasize [. . .] the 'otherness' of these writers and their work" (263). To avoid such fallacies we must situate postcolonial texts in their cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. With regard to my study of metaphor, it is important to examine the ways in which the oral traditions of Caribbean performance poetry and the significance of naming in the history of slavery have altered received notions of metaphor and shaped the use and function of metaphor in Caribbean texts. A theoretical recontextualization of metaphor, then, both offers a self-critical approach towards reading postcolonial texts and examines the different ways in which the texts discussed in this study bring together their specific political and aesthetic concerns through their use of language.

The observation that a number of contradictions characteristic of postcolonial texts concerned with experiences of migration and cultural displacement symbolically intersect with the theoretical predicament of metaphor serves as the second point of departure for my study. The first and most apparent contradiction arises from the texts themselves. Texts such as Derek Walcott's *Omeros* and Austin Clarke's *The Origin of Waves* contest the notion of a cohesive cultural identity and dramatize different patterns of national and cultural belonging. Yet, these texts are replete with metaphor, a trope that conventionally generates a totalizing form of identity through processes of substitution and similarity.

Further, the various extents to which these texts employ such Creole languages as St. Lucian patois or Barbadian dialect indicate that a history of violent cultural displacement, contamination, synthesis, and relocation informs the politics and aesthetics of these texts. The postcolonial writer's predicament of having to write in the colonizer's language and claiming it as his or her own makes the postcolonial condition one of perpetual cultural translation. Through their shared operations of cultural and textual transference, translations largely work through metaphorical operations. Cultural translations, as this study proposes, work on the lexical and semantic level of language to resignify and literalize received metaphors of identity in different cultural contexts. Instead of focusing on metaphor's drive towards dialectical closure, I wish to explore metaphor's operative modes of translation in order to contest the trope's binary division into tenor and vehicle, and to foreground the ways in which metaphor participates in discourses of cultural difference. To examine metaphor as an agent of cultural translation allows us to read, rather than dissolving, the contradictions of postcolonial identity.

To different degrees and from different cultural perspectives texts such as Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*, David Dabydeen's *Turner*, and M.G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets* invite us to consider the ways in which two further theoretical problems of metaphor intersect with questions of postcolonial identity formation. The first problem concerns the Derridean notion that we can speak about or theorize metaphor only in terms of metaphor. Dabydeen's long poem *Turner* illustrates that postcolonial identities cannot be negotiated outside imperial and received discourses of cultural representation. The political and formal predicament *Turner* explores is that one can speak of and claim identity only in terms of previous concepts of identity. Employing various configurations of the name "Turner," the poem rehearses the predicament of both metaphor and identity to deconstruct imperially received forms of cultural representation. The second aspect that links the theoretical concerns raised by metaphor with those of postcolonial writing refers to the overdetermination of metaphorical meaning. In Lee's and Vassanji's novels the attempt at

articulating a specific cultural identity is frequently eroded by the historical overdetermination of cultural origins or, put differently, by the various effects colonial encounters and migration have on identity. These texts dramatize the mixed and multiple origins of cultural belonging through the use of metaphor. As a trope that can never fully do away with its connotations of identity yet always refers to more than one meaning, metaphor lends itself to narratives of indeterminate cultural origins without compromising the need to articulate specific cultural identifications. Metaphor's endless detours and overdetermination of meanings, its predicament of undermining the very discourse it produces, enables, as I wish to argue, productive readings of the ways in which some of the texts I examine undermine their own narratives of cultural identity and bring to crisis homogenizing forms of cultural representation.

II. An "Indian Thief" and the "Twofold Character of Language": I.A. Richards and Roman Jakobson

Richards and the Dialectic of Metaphor

Richards' pioneering study, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936), articulates metaphor as an interactive trope by defining rhetoric as discourse rather than as the art of persuasion and ornamentation. Richards' reading of metaphor hinges on his notion that rhetoric "should be the study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3). In classical rhetoric, he suggests, misunderstandings derive from the desire to communicate an essential idea without considering "how words work in discourse" (5) or the ways in which words suppress or emphasize the specific contexts through which ideas are perceived and imparted. Richards contests that words have meanings in themselves, that they (meanings and words) work like the layers of an onion that can be removed until one arrives at the core of a notion. Words, Richards proposes, produce meaning by what they effect in specific contexts, by their interactive relationships and openness to diverse perceptions, experiences, and interpretations.

Insofar as Richards' study insists on the discursive production of meaning and its instability, it anticipates a deconstructive approach to metaphor. "Stability in a word's meaning," Richards maintains, "is not something to be assumed, but always something to be explained" (11). Further, if contexts and meanings are perforce unstable and shifting, we have to dispense with what Richards aptly calls the "Proper Meaning Superstition" (11). Put differently, in Richards' view language cannot claim or produce proper, unequivocal meaning; it does not work on two separate levels of literal and figurative meaning. Instead, meaning results from the transaction and transference of contexts so that "metaphor" itself "is the omnipresent principle of language" (92), thought (94), and meaning production. Yet, from Richards' perspective the production of meaning is neither arbitrary nor infinite but determined by an internal and universal "structure [. . .] with

which discourse is composed" (9) and this structure must be accounted for (9). This presupposition of a deep structure of discourse underlies Richards' conceptualization of metaphor as a trope consisting of an internal structure whose elements—tenor, vehicle, and ground—interact with one another to produce metaphorical meaning.

Richards' study is perhaps best known for making metaphor accessible to the empirical practices of "explicit science" (96) by introducing the terms tenor, vehicle, and ground to describe the structural elements of metaphor. "[T]he tenor," Richard argues, refers to "the underlying idea or principal subject which the vehicle or figure means" (97). Both the tenor/idea and the vehicle/figure share a "common characteristic" (117), the ground, and interact to produce a metaphor. Thus, while the tenor designates an idea expressed in the vehicle, the ground of a metaphor refers to a common denominator, a resemblance or disparity, that links the two ideas that are traditionally combined in a metaphor.[6] A metaphor, however, does not consist of a single configuration of either the vehicle or the tenor. Instead, a metaphor, according to Richards, emerges only when tenor and vehicle work in tandem to produce a meaning higher than the ones that can be ascribed to either term. To understand metaphor, Richards argues, we must "distinguish at least [the trope's] two co-operative uses" of tenor and vehicle. As Paul Ricoeur has argued at length, Richards reopened the theoretical debate on metaphor and enabled a reading of metaphor not merely as a figurative trope of resemblance but as the production of meaning through language. Richards' important legacy of metaphor is at least twofold. First, his doubt that metaphor achieves a form of "identification or fusion" opens the possibility for non-totalizing readings of metaphor. Second, his conviction that "there are very few metaphors in which disparities between tenor and vehicle are not as much operative as the similarities" (127) implies that difference functions as a central operative mode of metaphor.

For a postcolonial reading of metaphor, however, Richards' rather mechanical and depoliticized conceptualization of the trope poses a number of problems. Underlying Richards' theory is his assumption that the "true work" of words "is to restore life itself to

order" (134). While he does not specify the nature of life's order, the ideologically fraught term "order" evokes questions of cultural hierarchy and mastery. Who defines this order? What are its norms and values? Regardless of how we answer these questions, Richards' theory of metaphor suggests an intention to control the ambiguous effects of metaphor. Metaphor, Richards observes, causes "fear" (91) and therefore must be mastered, because the "metaphors we are avoiding steer our thought as much as those we accept" (92). The fear Richards senses is metaphor's ability to operate outside its user's conscious control and to erode what counts as truths, facts, and proper communication. Because metaphor always produces meaning that exceeds what is knowable to a subject, it cannot be controlled by an intending subject and thereby threatens this subject's sovereignty. On the one hand, then, Richards anticipates a de Manian reading of metaphor by addressing the trope's self-deconstructive qualities that prompted 18th-century empiricists to condemn metaphor. On the other, his own treatment of metaphor seems to be an elaborate attempt at keeping the fear of metaphor under control by providing the theoretical "remedies" for the communicative "misunderstanding[s]" (3) caused by metaphor.

The premise of mastery in Richards' theory, then, is worked out in his tripartite division of metaphor into tenor, vehicle, and ground. For a postcolonial understanding of metaphor the problem of Richards' idealist concept of metaphor does not reside in the tenor-vehicle structure, but in the ways in which we define the ground of metaphor and the interaction between tenor and vehicle. Richards suggests that the common ground that links tenor and vehicle can refer to a "direct resemblance (118) or to a form of difference in which the two terms "belong[] to very different orders of experience" (124). In each case the ground of metaphor, the trope's stability and functionality, depends on common assumptions and silent agreements about allegedly universal cultural and social values that allow the reader to impose an identity on different experiences. For example, by saying that "an idea or a notion, when unencumbered and undisguised, is no easier to get hold of than one of those oiled and naked thieves who infest the railway carriages of India" (5),

Richards constructs a metaphor of language by establishing a correspondence between an idea of truth he rejects and the figure of a defiled Indian body. More clearly, the metaphor is designed to explain what Richards calls the "Proper Meaning Superstition" (11), the notion that neither truths nor words have meanings outside their particular contexts. The metaphor, however, relies on the colonial stereotype that Indians are elusive, unruly thieves who spread diseases and undermine law and order. To Richards, then, the notion of a bare truth, of a meaning that exists in and for itself, is as dangerous and slippery as "one of those oiled and naked thieves" of India. Both the vehicle (the racialized Indian body) and the tenor (the notion of a truth unchanged by discourse and context) threaten the laws of communication and rhetoric with disruption and anarchy. The common ground of Richards' metaphor is a racist notion of pathological inferiority he ascribes to the allegedly licentious Indian body and to ideas that purport to produce meaning outside their specific contexts.

The operative modes of Richards' metaphor are similarity and assimilation. In contrast to Richards' assumption that a metaphor brings together "two different orders of experience," his own use of metaphor demonstrates that metaphor as a power trope involves the fabrication of two different experiences. More precisely, in a binary fashion, his metaphor aligns Western philosophy with a spiritual order and colonialism with a physical order of experience. The image of the "oiled and naked thieves [. . .] of India" serves as the metaphor's vehicle while, at the same time, erasing the actual material and historical experiences of the colonized in order to propose a philosophical argument. Richards' metaphor of the "Proper Meaning Superstition," then, provides an example of what Derrida calls the "white mythology" of metaphor. By transferring a specifically racialized physical figure into a philosophical argument, Richards' metaphor neutralizes different cultural and historical experiences. Through the dialectical synthesis of two terms, the originally physical image that constitutes the vehicle is erased and taken to a higher

plane of philosophical meaning. In Richards' own words, "vehicle and tenor in co-operation give a meaning of more varied powers than can be ascribed to either" (100).

To Richards this dialectical process is central to the operations of metaphor and, in the larger context of his argument, to what he sees as the universal operations of language itself. Underlying Richard's dialectical concept of metaphor and language is Coleridge's Romantic notion that language functions like a growing organism, uniting a myriad of differences and particularities in an organic whole. To Richards metaphor not merely refers to a rhetorical trope but functions as the ordering and fundamental principle of language and cognition. "A 'command of metaphor' - a command of the interpretation of metaphor -," Richards writes, "can go deeper still into the control of the world that we make for ourselves to live in" (135). To a large extent, cognitive and interactive theories of metaphor by such philosophers and linguists as George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Max Black are indebted to Richards' concept of metaphor. What these theories share with Richards' is an emphasis on a fully self-conscious subject who can actually gain command over metaphor.

Further, from Richards' perspective, metaphor appears to have an almost therapeutic capacity to resolve conflicting meanings or experiences. Equating metaphor with psychoanalytical transference, he suggests that the vehicle presents the pathological condition of the patient, "the borrowed attitude, the parental fixation" that "tyrannizes over the new situation, the tenor [. . .]. The victim is unable to see the new person except in terms of the old passion and its accidents" (135). Considering that Richards echoes Aristotle's reading of metaphor as a trope that expresses one thing in terms of another, we may be tempted to say that Richards considers metaphor itself to be pathological. Such a reading would at least acknowledge metaphor's restrictive and hegemonic effects. Instead, Richards resolves the conflict between vehicle and tenor by arguing for a free cooperation between both terms from which "the new human relationship" (136) can emerge. Apart from their emphasis on a normative subject, the analogies between vehicle and pathological condition, tenor and blocked healthy behavior suggest that metaphor possesses a certain

deep structure. More clearly, in Richards' analogies the vehicle refers to surface symptoms such as a neurotic fixation or nervous behavior that signal a psychic disorder but are not the causes of that disorder. This analogy echoes Richards' belief that the ornamental function of metaphor can be separated from a "proper" function of metaphor. It is also significant to note that Richards' association of the vehicle with deception and superficiality corresponds to the ways in which racist and essentializing images of the black body serve as a vehicle for both Richards' own use of metaphor and colonial practices of cultural Othering through metaphor. Furthermore, underneath the symptomatic configuration of the vehicle, then, lies the tenor, which, in Richards' psychoanalytical analogy, refers to the depth of meaning from which to recover the true causes of a disorder. Richards' binarisms of pathological versus healthy behaviour, ornamental versus proper meaning are predicated on such traditional and dichotomous critical categories as reality versus appearance, signifier versus signified. As Bhabha's critical work and Dabydeen's novel *The Intended* show, such categories presume that literary texts contain a hidden truth derived from Western value systems and foreclose that reality or truth are themselves constructed categories and, thus, a matter of representation and interpretation. Along with postcolonial theorists Rey Chow and Marie Louise Pratt, I will argue that the division between surface and depth structures of meaning, between artifice and true nature, constitutes the imperial discourses of power that produce the colonial Other and the imperial Self. In fact, texts such as Dabydeen's *Turner* and Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* invite us to read metaphor against itself to deconstruct the division between surface and depth.

My discussion of Richards' study, then, underscores those ideological investments of metaphor that conventionally define it as a master trope. Three dominant aspects of metaphor are of specific interest to a careful postcolonial reading of the trope. First, against Richards' tendency to use metaphor as a synonym for the ordering qualities of language, I want to examine metaphor as a rhetorical figure to keep in sight the culturally particular uses and appropriations of the trope. Rather than defining metaphor as a "remedy" or

normative corrective for miscommunication, my study foregrounds the ideological and cultural conflicts and contradictions metaphor engenders. Second, in contrast to Richards' approach, mine examines the ways in which the trope's division into tenor, vehicle, and ground effects dominant discourses of power, of cultural and national identity. If Richards argues that a metaphor consists of a "tenor and a vehicle which co-operate in an inclusive meaning" (119), many of the texts examined in this study employ metaphor to demonstrate that the assimilatory operation of tenor and vehicle excludes particular cultural meanings and produces the restrictive effects of metaphor. Third, the degree to which metaphor functions as a master trope depends on the ways in which we define and read its operative modes, namely the relationship between tenor and vehicle. To Richards, tenor and vehicle interact dialectically with each other to synthesize the differences or similarities that connect both terms in the first place. In contrast to a dialectical relationship between tenor and vehicle, my readings of various postcolonial texts foreground repetition and citation as metaphor's *modi operandi*. The predominant functions of metaphor, as I read them, are naming, cultural translation, and the resignification of received cultural meanings. In various ways Walcott's and Dabydeen's strategies of naming or Vassanji's and Lee's practices of cultural translation engage metaphor to dramatize the historical and cultural overdetermination of its vehicle. Instead of dialectically closing the gap between vehicle and tenor, these texts destabilize the binary relationship between tenor and vehicle by dismantling the ways in which the referentiality of both terms has been culturally and historically generated.

The Jakobsonian Legacy of Metaphor

To a certain extent, a critical reading of Richards' theory of metaphor helps explain the ways in which metaphor functions as a dialectical master trope and cannot but be implicated in cultural and social discourses of representation. The underpinning assumption of his theory of metaphor is that language emerges from and is bound to its communicative

functions. For this reason, Richards cannot account for the self-destabilizing effects of metaphor in his own text. The metaphor of the "Indian thief" illustrates that metaphor works outside and beyond its user's intentions and thwarts the theorist's fantasy of both textual mastery and the existence of a controlling, fully self-conscious subject. In contrast to Richards' work, Roman Jakobson's classic essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" (1953) employs a formalist-structuralist approach to language. He argues that metaphor and metonymy function as universal processes of language that are largely independent of their users and supersede the traditional division of language into figurative and literary uses. The enormous influence Jakobson's essay has had on literary theory in general and on the critical assessment of modern literature in particular is still registered in such postcolonial readings of metaphor as Bhabha's. Since Bhabha's work occupies a central position in my study, we need to discuss Jakobson's essay in more detail. My reading of metaphor, however, positions itself against, to paraphrase Ricoeur, the by now permanent Jakobsonian coupling of metaphor and metonymy. Such a pairing cannot account for the multiple ways in which metaphor operates in texts shaped by specific historical and cultural discourses of power.

Jakobson's essay can be divided into two parts. The first part consists of a linguistic study of the "[t]wofold [c]haracter of [l]anguage" (117) and aphasia. "Speech" and writing, Jakobson says, "impl[y] a selection of certain linguistic entities and their combination into linguistic units of a higher degree of complexity" (117). The first operation, selection, designates the metaphoric pole of language. It takes place on the paradigmatic level of language and enables language users to substitute one term for another based on association and the recognition of similarity. To perceive and substitute similar terms for one another is a form of linguistic "arrangement" Jakobson describes, by resorting to Saussure, as a connection of terms and the way in which these terms are coded in the speaker's memory. Thus, Jakobson associates the metaphoric pole of language with *langue* rather than with *parole*. The second operation, combination, belongs to the

metonymic pole of language and takes place on the syntagmatic level of language, for it functions through the contiguity of terms in language and reality. The metonymic pole of language is closely associated with *parole* since the speaker combines linguistic entities present in an actual message. Having outlined the two principal operations of language, Jakobson suggests that aphasia occurs either as a similarity disorder, the inability to perceive and express similarities, or as a contiguity disorder, the inability to combine linguistic units and maintain their hierarchy.

In the second part of his essay, Jakobson transfers the metaphoric and metonymic operations of language into a literary context. He opens the possibility of applying his bipolar model of aphasia to other areas of language study by arguing that both poles work together in "normal verbal behaviour." Yet, "under the influence of cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other" (129). Whether inflected by individual style or cultural particulars, similarity and contiguity establish analogies that identify different discourses with one another. On the basis of this principle Jakobson characterizes a number of different literary and artistic traditions as either metaphoric or metonymic. For example, while Russian songs, Romanticism, Symbolism, and poetry operate metaphorically, the heroic epic, Realist writing, and prose function metonymically. Jakobson further supports his argument by creating an analogy between his notion of the bipolarity of language and Freud's dream analysis, in which dreams work either metonymically through displacement and condensation or metaphorically through identification and symbolism.

In literary criticism, Jakobson argues, a predominant interest in metaphor and a disdain for prose have prevented a sufficient analysis of the literary functions of metonymy in Realist texts. According to Jakobson's observation, "the Realist author" works through "contiguous relationships" and "metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time" (130). The absence of critical studies of metonymy, Jakobson finds, derives from the available texts and reading

practices through which critics construct a metalanguage to discuss the functions of tropes. He suggests that critics "possess[] more homogeneous means to handle metaphor" (132) because in poetic discourses metaphors largely function as symbols which are connected by similarity and can be substituted for one another. Thus, critics can talk about metaphor in terms of metaphor. Jakobson overlooks that the necessity to speak about metaphor in terms of metaphor neither presents a choice, as Derrida argues, nor does it guarantee unequivocal interpretations of metaphor. To Jakobson, however, it is not metaphor but metonymy that "easily defies interpretation" (132). In contrast to metaphor, metonymy is often overlooked by critics because it does not operate through comparable signs or symbols but focuses on a referent. This critical blindness makes metonymy an orphaned trope, and reflects both the prose bias of critics and, in Jakobson's terms, literary criticism's affliction with a contiguity disorder.

Jakobson's bipolar model of the metaphoric and metonymic functions of language has been widely criticized for, as Paul Ricoeur aptly puts it, "its extreme generality and its extreme simplicity" (178). The reductive thrust of the Jakobsonian scheme consists in its inability to account for the ways in which metaphors interact with one another or emerge through operations of dissimilarity and semantic discontinuity. Ricoeur rightly argues that in Jakobson's theory "metaphor settles into the status of substitution of one term for another, just as in classical rhetoric" (179). Furthermore, from Ricoeur's perspective Jakobson's emphasis on the symbolic character of metaphor as a sign fails to explain both metaphor's "predicative character" (179) and the way in which metaphor operates metonymically and metonymy metaphorically. For example, Ricoeur suggests that names, though traditionally considered as metonymies, function through substitution and thus belong to the Jakobsonian category of metaphor. To take this example one step further, we may ask how we are to theorize names in such texts as Walcott's *Omeros*. This text neither metaphorically substitutes nor metonymically displaces names. Instead, names dramatize, cite, and resignify a chain of historical and cultural experiences. Regardless of Ricoeur's

own problematic argument that metaphors do not operate on a one-word level, his comments on Jakobson demonstrate that a binary construction of the operative modes of metaphor and metonymy impairs a consideration of each trope on its own terms.

Yet, it is precisely the coupling of metaphor and metonymy, the often unacknowledged practice of reading metaphor only through its relation to metonymy, that seems to me the most problematic and persistent legacy of Jakobson's essay. Moreover, the binary perception of both tropes entails that we assign each trope clearly defined and exclusive properties which, over time, assume the status of unquestioned ideological values associated with either metaphor or metonymy. For example, in the discourse of modernist literary criticism, Jakobson's notion that metaphor designates a highly poetic and individual process of substituting one symbol for another has helped make metaphor a privileged trope of modernist writing. In his essay "The Language of Modernist Fiction: Metaphor and Metonymy," David Lodge employs Jakobson's model as an explanatory device to show that both metonymy and metaphor, as Jakobson defines them, work in tandem in a number of modernist texts and frequently compensate for the dissolution of a concise narrative structure. Lodge's examples for the modernist uses of metaphor and metonymy show that metaphor occurs predominantly in interior monologues, introspection, and psychoanalytical processes of association. In contrast to metaphor's experimental, symbolist, and imagist uses, metonymy frequently refers to the characters' perception of the exterior and social and proceeds by contiguous relationships between objects, experiences, and meanings of words. In spite of Lodge's well-known emphasis on the simultaneous presence of metaphor and metonymy in modernist texts, his reading of the tropes' operative modes -- though not necessarily their effects -- complies with the bipolar functions of language set out by Jakobson.

Jakobson's notion of metaphor and its influence on the critical reading practices of modernist texts is crucial to my argument because it has implicitly contributed to the marginalization of metaphor in postcolonial discourses. Bhabha's as well as Gilles Deleuze

and Felix Guattari's readings of metaphor illustrate both the ways in which discourses of ethnic and postcolonial writing are still haunted by Jakobson's structuralist legacy and the necessity to reread metaphor in different theoretical contexts. Bhabha's work, for example, proposes a theory of nation formation and identity in which cultural difference operates both metonymically and metaphorically to shift received power relations. In fact, Bhabha's joint reading of metonymy and metaphor strives to overcome Jakobson's bipolar concept of language. Yet, insofar as Bhabha sees metaphor as a trope of substitution and metonymy as one of displacement, he articulates the *operative* modes of both tropes in Jakobsonian terms. It seems to me, then, that specifically in his early texts, Bhabha's tendency to privilege metonymy over metaphor derives from Jakobson's notion that metonymy functions through contiguity and displacement and, more importantly, resists both totalizing constructions of meaning and textual and interpretive control.

Similarly, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's ground-breaking concept of a "minor literature," which, since its publication in 1986, has significantly shaped the works of various ethnic Canadian literary critics,[7] is marked by the Jakobsonian notion of metaphor. Although Deleuze and Guattari's division between metaphor and metonymy is less categorical than Bhabha's, it informs their notion of deterritorialized and referential writing. The former refers to specific narrative forms that disrupt received chains of signification and operate metonymically. "[C]ontiguity," the operative mode of metonymy in Jakobsonian terms, Guattari and Deleuze argue, "[is itself] an active and continuous line of escape" (61) from proper referentiality. In contrast, by taking recourse to Kafka's notion of metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that metaphors are symbolist tropes of power whose nominal and referential functions must be opposed to the "revolutionary" (18) potential of ethnic literatures. Metaphors, they argue, are tropes of reterritorialization, or referential writing unfractured by different languages or vernaculars; they are "those other things that words designate under certain situations and conditions" (20). In other words, like Jakobson, Deleuze and Guattari associate metaphor with acts of substitution and

designation. Yet, the revolutionizing and deterritorializing imperative Guattari and Deleuze assign to ethnic writing often determines to what degree metaphor is denied to and marginalized in ethnic literary discourses. What these two theorists overlook is metaphor's mnemonic function in ethnic and postcolonial texts. For example, such texts as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Walcott's *Omeros* depend on metaphor to restage and historicize the traumatic experiences of slavery or of colonial loss and violence. Deleuze and Guattari's exclusion of metaphor from what they define as an "*intensive utilization* of language" (1986, 22)[8] is highly problematic: for, not only does such an exclusion normalize discourses of ethnic writing, thereby undermining these theorists' own aspirations of evaluating ethnic writing on its own terms, but it also participates in what Smaro Kamboureli calls the "technology of ethnicity" (1993, 202), the dominant practices of constructing ethnic identity.

Bhabha's as well as Guattari and Deleuze's reluctance to engage in a critical discussion of metaphor reflects, I think, the way in which Jakobson's theory of language categorizes metaphor as a trope of substitution, symbolism, and textual mastery. Read as a symbolist legacy of modernist discourse, metaphor has very little, if anything, to offer to postcolonial studies. More specifically, a symbolist or Jakobsonian understanding of metaphor is diametrically opposed to postcolonial critical practices because it dehistoricizes and depoliticizes the contexts in which metaphor occurs in favor of a writer's textual mastery and idiosyncratic uses of metaphor. As a discipline concerned with a critical reassessment of the ways in which the master narratives and tropes of Western modernism have been shaped by the politics and history of colonialism, slavery, and race ideologies, postcolonial studies faces the ambivalent task of having to articulate the functions and effects of metaphor within and beyond the paradigms of modernist writing. Taking into consideration the dominance of Jakobson's understanding of metaphor not only amongst critics but also amongst such postcolonial writers as Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, and David Dabydeen,[9] we need to develop a critical reading apparatus of metaphor that,

paradoxically, both acknowledges and destabilizes the Jakobsonian legacy of metaphor. A performative understanding of metaphor, as I will argue, challenges Jakobson's dictum that metaphor operates primarily through substitution and similarity. Yet, it also foregrounds the mnemonic functions of the trope as well as the "cultural pattern[s]" (Jakobson 129) under which preference is given to metaphor. Furthermore, while a performative reading of metaphor distances itself from symbolist notions of the trope, it still maintains a link with the kind of modernisms that articulate metaphor as a trope of crisis.[10]

III. How to Undo Things with Metaphor: Performance, Performativity, and the Performative

What is a performative metaphor? Does metaphor participate in theatrical practices, usually associated with the term performance? Or do metaphors, in J.L. Austin's sense of the performative, do what they say? Regardless of whether we try to define the terms performance, performativity, and the performative through a theoretical or a dramaturgical perspective, we must begin to answer these questions by acknowledging that text, speech, and ritual all involve or effect some form of performative practice. Austin's publication of *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) has moved the notion of performance from its conventional dramatic meanings into the arena of philosophy, thus raising questions about the ways in which the performative functions of language shape identity and construct social conventions. Derrida's critical response to Austin's speech-act theory and Judith Butler's elaboration of Derrida's arguments have facilitated a terminological and theoretical shift from performance, as a fully conscious and self-creative act, to that of performativity, as a critical investigation of the ways in which identities are formed and rearticulated through language and within discourses of power. In contrast to the theatrical connotations of performance, Butler's definition of performativity follows Derrida and designates the cultural and political practices of identity formation that operate through complex processes of citation and iteration. For the purpose of articulating a definition of performative metaphors in a postcolonial context, it is useful to distinguish between the different theoretical implications of the terms performative, performance, and performativity. More specifically, I want to outline the ways in which Butler employs Austin's notion of performative speech and Derrida's concept of citationality to articulate performativity as a self-critical practice and theory of identity. Moreover, in the context of my study, the significance of Butler's theory lies in its emphasis on the historicity of discourses, for it enables a postcolonial reading practice of metaphor that underscores the productive rather than restrictive effects of the trope.

Austin and the Unhappy Metaphor

In Austin's speech-act theory language neither operates as a closed system nor functions outside its own boundaries; meaning is not produced outside of language, while language has no meaning in itself. Instead, language is an act that does things within certain social conventions; it is both a social process and a performative act. According to Austin's language philosophy, a performative speech act produces what it names, and is thus distinguished from a constative speech act which makes a descriptive statement by representing a referent. A performative speech act has an illocutionary force: it effects what it names by mobilizing established social conventions and discourses of power. In this sense, the "illocutionary *force*" of a performative speech act, as Sandy Petrey points out, "is a combination of language and social practice" (13). Illocution, then, refers to the practice of situating the performative functions of language in a specific social setting and group of speakers. It is distinguished from locution, a purely linguistic utterance, and perlocution, the consequences or effects that follow a performative speech act. Austin's theory emphasizes the illocutionary force of performatives in order to demonstrate the ways in which language acts rather than means. For performative speech to have illocutionary force, or to be successful, it must fulfill at least two prerequisites: it must conform to given social conventions and it must be felicitous. Together with Austin's most frequently cited example of the marriage ceremony as a successful performative speech act, these two prerequisites have become the most controversial aspects of Austin's theory.

Of Austin's proposed six rules of performative language, the first one serves as the basis of his entire theory. He argues that performative language must conform to social conventions: "[t]here must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances" (14). Dependent on a small yet homogeneous group of language users, generic language situations, and social conventions whose grounds and conditions of authority Austin does not specify, performative speech is implicated in

various discourses of power. More specifically, such a performative speech act as the ritual and legislating words of the marriage ceremony ("I pronounce you husband and wife") demands, as Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick remark, consenting "silent or implied witnesses" (7). For the witnesses sanctify the validity of the heterosexual agenda the marriage pronouncement installs as being normal and authoritative. The social conventions a performative act draws from are often universalized discourses of power that reinforce social and sexual norms through exclusion. If the marriage pronouncement installs and confirms the hegemony of heterosexuality, it also defines homosexuality as the abject, the unlivable outside the margins of a social community. Read through Austin, then, performative speech acts enact and produce authority and social norms. These acts include legal speech (e.g., sentences, marriages, property transactions), opening or inauguration ceremonies, as well as injurious speech.[11]

The second prerequisite of performative speech demands that performative acts be successful or, in Austin's terms, felicitous. Because performative speech acts effect a certain action but do not raise questions about the truth of a certain statement, they cannot be judged as being true or false. Their effectiveness must thus be measured according to whether or not they enact what they name. Austin, of course, acknowledges that performative speech acts are frequently infelicitous. For example, to promise to return a book on a certain date becomes an infelicitous performative act if the book is not returned on time. But more importantly, Austin argues that performative speech belongs to spoken language, has an addressee as well as a specific community that gives it illocutionary force. The immediacy of performative speech distinguishes it from all forms of representational speech. According to Austin, such forms of representational speech as writing, poetry, and drama are infelicitous and mere locutions because they occur in artificial--staged or imagined-- social settings and they lack a direct addressee. Austin writes that a

> performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, of if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy [. . .]. Language in such circumstances is in special ways— intelligibly —used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use [. . .]. All this we are *excluding* from consideration. Our performative utterances, felicitous or not, are to be understood as issued in ordinary circumstance. (22)

This often quoted passage from Austin's speech act theory is relevant for my study for at least three reasons.

First, from Austin's perspective, metaphor cannot be considered as a performative act, because it belongs to the symbolic realm of language and, by definition, neither does nor means what it says. By the same token, metaphor belongs to the *"parasitic"* or derivative order of language. "Void" of control and the ability to perform originally or felicitously, metaphor is conceptually opposed to Austin's notion of performative speech. Indeed, the volatility of metaphor threatens to destabilize performative acts insofar as these are considered to be fully conscious, intentional, and therefore mastering acts of language. However, if we consider metaphors as tropes of power operating through substitution, we can say that they are performative speech acts to the degree that their reading, poetic effect, and definition depend on social and literary conventions. Furthermore, unlike a performative speech act, a metaphor does not have an unequivocal referent.[12] Second, the above quoted passage reveals a terminological ambiguity. Austin deliberately sets apart his definition of performative speech from a theatrical understanding of performance. On the one hand, his distinction implies that performative speech does not participate in any form of theatrical subversion of cultural and political norms, from carnival to drag. On the other, it suggests that performative speech belongs to a literal register of language that is used under "ordinary circumstance." Third, Austin's insistence on employing a strategy of exclusion to put forth a consistent theory of performative language has occasioned Derrida's critique of Austin. Derrida's essay "Signature Event Context" (1982), which includes both his response to Austin and his concept of citationality, provides a useful point of departure for a discussion of Butler's term performativity. Derrida's essay also suggests

that the ways in which we make sense of written and spoken language intersect in important ways. For a postcolonial reading of metaphor, it is crucial to articulate ways in which both of these language registers intersect, regardless of whether or not one can separate them at all. For example, Caribbean performance poetry, as I argue in chapter one, invites us to read the Derridean understanding of writing and Butler's notion of performativity in tandem with the specifically Caribbean traditions of orality. At the same time, however, we need to consider the historically different values the spoken and the written word have in different cultures.

Derrida and Butler: Iteration, Citationality, and Performativity

Derrida's essay is subtitled a "communication to the Congrès international des Sociétés de philosophies de langue française, Montréal, August 1971" (307). This subtitle not only addresses the theme of the conference, "Communication," but also the traditional distinction between communication as spoken language directed towards a present receiver and the written text as a secondary form of communication with an absent addressee. Through a discussion of Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, Derrida unfolds his familiar argument that in the history of Western philosophy the myth of the immediacy, originality, and truth-value of the spoken word has taken precedence over the written word, understood as a poor imitation of the spoken original. Against this myth, Derrida argues that the intrinsic dynamics of language, the workings of absence and *différance*, make it impossible to fully master either the spoken or the written word. Language, and writing in particular, is legible or comprehensible beyond the sender or writer of a message only if it is repeatable. For example, by reading or decoding a message one inevitably repeats it in order to make sense of it.

This repetition, however, is not a repetition of the same, but an iteration, a repetition with a difference. For iterability, Derrida reminds us, derives from the Sanskrit word "*itara, other*," and "links repetition to alterity" (315). On the one hand, this form of

repetition enables us to identify and communicate codes. On the other, it makes it impossible to understand writing or other codes of communication as a closed system. Instead, iterability opens writing towards meanings unintended and unforeseen by the sender. Iterability, Derrida argues, entails the possibility that a "written sign [. . .] break[s] with its context" (317), the context in which it was first inscribed, and can be transferred to or, in Derrida's terms, "*graft[ed]*" onto (317) a chain of other contexts. Put differently, the written sign and the spoken word have neither a clearly defined referent nor intention. Instead, they carry the mark of a differential inscription, a remainder of meaning "cut off from its alleged production or origin" (318), that generates an infinite number of meanings. Derrida emphasizes that through iterability every "spoken or written" sign "can be *cited* [. . .] and engender infinitely new contexts [. . .]. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark [. . .] is that [. . .] without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called 'normal' functioning" (320-21). Citationality and iterability, then, are two operative modes of language, whether this language is spoken or written, that generate and disrupt meaning and thereby prevent language from working in a self-identical manner. In other words, spoken or written language never fully means or does what it says.

It must be apparent by now that Derrida's theory deconstructs Austin's notion of performative language. His response to Austin raises three issues that are specifically important for understanding Butler's performativity and the way in which I apply it to metaphor. First, he acknowledges that Austin's notion of a performative speech act puts forth a crucial argument because it "does not describe something which exists outside and before language." Instead, it foregrounds the productive and operative abilities of language through its potential to "transform[] a situation" (321). A performative speech act, as Butler sees it, entails, in Austin's sense, authoritative speech and, in Derrida's understanding, a productive or transforming quality. Butler's dual perspective of performativity, as I will demonstrate, implies the possibility to rearticulate the performative in the context of a

politically effective and disruptive practice and theory of identity. The second and third points of Derrida's critique of Austin deal with the marginal role Austin allocates to the locutionary and iterative force of language. Yet, both of these points also raise further questions about the ways in which performative speech acts operate in different cultural settings.

The second point of Derrida's critique, then, suggests that Austin's theory does not take into consideration the destabilizing impact of locution, of the linguistic utterance Austin deliberately excludes from his analysis of performative language. By ruling out that an utterance operates through *différance* and iteration, Austin's notion of "performative communication," Derrida argues, "once more becomes the communication of an intentional meaning" (322), uttered by a fully conscious subject. Derrida's emphasis on the force of locution, however, tends to minimize the socially and historically transforming power of performative speech, which is Austin's central concern. Derrida's critique of Austin does not account for the ways in which performative speech acts function under certain conditions of power and in different cultural contexts. The illocutionary force of language, its ability to draw from and regulate social conventions, however, presupposes that speakers and listeners share social norms that make performative speech acts legible. In other words, to different degrees both Derrida and Austin presuppose a fairly homogeneous and ideal group of speakers and listeners who utter and decipher performative speech acts.

In her essay "Listening for the Silence: Native Women's Traditional Narratives," Barbara Godard argues that dominant value systems that distinguish between high and low forms of literature have barred Native women from speaking in their own voice and from using Native traditions of oratory and story-telling. At first glance, this familiar argument of cultural marginalization does not seem to have any bearings on theories of performative speech. Yet, taking into consideration that stereotypes are performative speech acts insofar as they effect the humiliation and social exclusion of the addressee, discriminatory and

marginalizing forms of cultural representation are directly related to questions of performative speech. From Frances Brooke to Margaret Atwood, Godard argues, white Canadian women's writing has produced such cultural stereotypes of Native women as "turn[ing] squaw" (133). By "becoming the literary norm against which all later creative productions would be measured" (Godard 135), the stereotype of the "squaw" establishes literary conventions of cultural representation that stigmatize Native women and hinder them from speaking in their own voice.

The illocutionary force of "turning squaw," then, depends on accepting and sharing the racist literary conventions in which this stereotype gains meaning. To intervene into such conventions, however, is difficult, for it requires us to listen carefully and to examine the social and cultural context in which performative speech acts are uttered. In a discussion with Prabha Khosla, Himani Bannerji argues that women writers of cultural minorities are often forced to fit into the cultural values and traditions of the mainstream literary establishment:

> [I]f you don't fit into that, then as far as they're concerned, you're not saying anything. And, they have a particular way of deciding what they'll count as 'saying,' and that 'saying' is not how we speak. [. . .] But, I think the other question about even illiterate people is not that they don't say things, it's *how* they say it. There is only one way of 'saying' that counts. In that sense, they are forcing all the most middle class, the most male bourgeois ways of speaking and doing things on us. And if you don't do things that way, then you're not doing it, you're not 'saying' it right. (qtd. in Godard, "Listening" 135)

Bannerj's argument that "saying and doing things" determine each other recalls Austin's notion of performative speech acts. Along with Austin, but in contrast to Derrida, Bannerji emphasizes the illocutionary force of language. Yet, other than Austin, Bannerji implies that a performative speech act uttered by a culturally marginalized subject does not count as being authoritative unless it invokes the social conventions of a dominant group. A postcolonial understanding of performative speech, then, needs to emphasize the modalities of power and the ways in which things are said. From a postcolonial perspective, a performative speech act does not necessarily draw on given social conventions or on saying

things "right." Instead, it must both emphasize illocution as a socially and culturally contested field of meaning production and say things wrong or in a distorting way so as to unhook received literary norms of cultural representation.

Butler's notion of performativity intersects with a postcolonial understanding of performance insofar as it situates the force of performative speech acts within socially and culturally specific discourses of power. In contrast to both Austin and Derrida, Butler argues that one must "fake" or emulate the authoritative impetus of performative speech acts to unhinge social norms. For the performer, however, it remains impossible to determine the precise effects of such a simulated act in advance. The disruptive effect of a faked performative speech act depends on how one says things and on not "saying them right." What is at issue, then, is not how to fix things with words, but how to undo things with words. Like Derrida, Butler rejects the existence of a fully conscious subject who controls and masters the outcome neither of a faked nor, in Austin's sense, authoritative performative speech act. Yet, while Derrida imputes the absence of an all-knowing subject to the differential operations of language itself, Butler attributes it to the discursive conditions of power through which subjects are produced. Since neither language nor subject formation processes take place outside the confines of power, the effect of a performative utterance cannot be restricted to the intrinsic operations of language itself— Austin's locution--but must be linked to the ways in which discourses of power work.

Butler's central argument, as it pertains to my study, is that discourses of power operate performatively. Drawing from Foucault's notion that power is not an exterior force exercised by an individual but a discursive formation that organizes a social field of action, through which subjects emerge and interact, Butler argues that, similar to a performative utterance, normative operations of power produce the subjects they name and control. Austin's example of the marriage pronouncement, for instance, can be read as a normative discourse of power, for the pronouncement is uttered within a legally enshrined discourse of heterosexuality that at once secures and produces heterosexuality as a social norm. In

itself, however, the declaration "I pronounce you husband and wife" has no power. It only becomes normative through a constant reiteration that over time confirms its validity and legality. Butler, therefore, understands the "constituting effect of regulatory power as reiterated and reiterable." Furthermore, similar to the marriage pronouncement, that excludes homosexuality as the socially abject, "power," Butler says, "works through the foreclosure of effects, the production of an 'outside'" (*Bodies* 22) that establishes what does and does not count as socially normative, acceptable, and intelligible. According to Butler, performative discourses, rather than performative speech acts uttered by a single individual, "exercise" and "confer a binding power on the action performed. If the power of discourse to produce that which it names is linked to the question of performativity, then the performative is one domain in which power acts *as* discourse" (*Bodies* 225). In this light, metaphors, I argue, are performatives insofar as they act as and produce normative discourses of cultural identity.

For a closer inspection of the ways in which discourses act performatively, we need to consider Derrida's third critique of Austin's theory. Derrida argues that without the possibility to reiterate and cite an utterance, this utterance would not be intelligible. Yet Austin, Derrida writes, "insists upon the fact that this possibility remains *abnormal, parasitical*, . . . an agony of language . . . from which one must resolutely turn away" (324). In the context of Derrida's notion of the graphematic properties of language, a performative cannot be understood, let alone do what it states, without it being cited or recognized as a citation. In a passage most frequently cited by Butler, Derrida asks:

> Could a performative statement succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable statement, in other words if the expressions I use to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as *conforming* to an iterable model, and therefore if they were not identifiable in a way as 'citation'? [. . .] [O]ne must [. . .] construct a differential typology of forms of iteration [. . .]. In this typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances. (326)

Derrida contends that performative speech acts operate within social conventions which may appear to be fixed but, in fact, are "iterable" and thus mutable "model[s]." With its ability to sever an utterance from its original referent and transfer it into numerous contexts, citationality disrupts the normative effects of performative utterances and the social conventions they confirm and produce.[13] In this sense, citationality, as opposed, say, to the citation of a poem, implies the possibility of subverting relations of power from within their normative structure. Butler's notion of performativity, then, construes a "typology of forms of iteration."

Yet, in her theory typology does not refer to an empirical or systematic enumeration of different types of iteration. Instead, it implies an analysis of the ways in which iteration becomes a practice that destabilizes and shapes different discourses of power. For example, tracing the genealogy of the term "queer," Butler asks how this term, which has historically been an insult, a negative performative, can be resignified in ways that do not merely reverse the binarisms through which this term has gained its power to injure (e.g., queer versus straight, deviant versus normal)? If "queer" is used as an insult, it functions as a performative discourse of power or, following Butler's abbreviation, as a performative not because of an underlying intention that determines what the performative does, but because the "action [of a performative] echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative practice*" (Butler, *Bodies* 227). On the one hand, "queer" acts as a performative because it draws from the various historical discourses of normative (hetero)sexuality that make "queer" legible within the history of its own production. On the other, by symbolically assuming the status of a present act, a performative hides its own historicity. Thus, Butler argues, "no statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force" (*Bodies* 227), namely, without reiterating the historical discourses of subjugation which it produces and through which it has been produced.

How, then, can "queer" interrupt and reformulate the normative discourses of power from which it has historically emerged? To claim "queer" as a term that "politiciz[es] identity and desire" requires "a turn *against* " the term's "constitutive historicity" (Butler, *Bodies* 227). On a practical level, exposing the ways in which a term has obtained regulatory and oppressive properties over time involves, for example, to hyperbolically mime and misquote both the norms to which that term has given rise and the anxieties and "illicit" desires caused by what these norms foreclose or disavow. It also entails a self-critical practice within political movements, for a genealogical analysis of the term "queer" needs to attend to the ways in which this term not only signifies gay pride, but also remains an ideologically contested terrain, and risks generating exclusionary and essentialist identity politics. Performativity, as I understand Butler, operates through a kind of citationality that makes social and cultural rules identifiable and mutable. Furthermore, performativity involves the reiteration of authoritative discourses of power. By disidentifying and misquoting received social and cultural codes, a performative practice attributes, while unveiling, new meanings to the history of regulatory discourses of power. It shows the ways in which subjects participate in the power structures they oppose and engender "alternative modalities of power" (Butler, *Bodies* 24). In this sense, performativity exercises a kind of agency that is neither a singular act nor governed by a subject who intends to determine the outcome of an action. Rather, while performative agency involves some form of theatricality, it first of all needs to be understood as a discursive and collective act. It is this aspect of performativity that allows me to develop a critical reading practice of metaphor in a postcolonial context.

The theatrical aspects of Butler's performativity, however, must be distinguished from other notions of dramatic performance. In contrast to performativity, stage performances generally involve singular and deliberate acts that demand a consciously acting individual who exteriorizes some form of hidden, interior truth. The performer assumes various roles over which he or she has full control. Performance itself acts as a

disguise that can be abandoned at will, and obscures the "true" identity of the performer. Furthermore, performance cannot account for the citational and reiterative force of subject formation processes. Butler argues that certain drag performances act out a "gender melancholy" (234), an unacknowledged loss of gender identity, which presupposes the prior existence of a cohesive gender identity that is recoverable through the performer's will. In chapter seven I discuss the ways in which Butler's notion of "gender melancholy" can be adapted as a reading strategy for the construction and simultaneous disavowal of specifically ethnic Canadian and Caribbean identities in Clarke's *The Origin of Waves* and Walcott's *Omeros*. Insofar as performance and performativity suggest two different forms of identity formation, Butler insists on a conceptual distinction between them.

However, I also consider performance as an important aspect of the oral and written traditions of Caribbean writing. Far from implying that performance can be considered as an original form of cultural representation, I suggest that Caribbean performance practices provide, in Godard's words, an "interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood" ("Listening" 137). With their emphasis on the historical and political contexts of events as well as on audience participation, Caribbean performance practices coincide with many of the aspects that define Butler's performativity. Yet, in contrast to Butler, Caribbean performance traditions place a greater emphasis on building and educating collective sensibilities across the colonially inherited racial divide that characterizes normative Caribbean identity patterns. Peformativity and performance, as I read them, are contiguous terms and need to be discussed in the cultural contexts in which they are employed. Like performativity, performance necessarily involves representation as a derivative and citational act, so that it is impossible, if not dangerously reductive, to insist on an unequivocal distinction between both terms. In the same vein, performative agency in Butler's sense also hyperbolizes and allegorizes social norms in order to disrupt and renegotiate them. In this sense, performative agency cannot be thought without a certain degree of theatricality. A clear-cut terminological distinction raises even more questions if

we consider that Butler's notion of performativity is indebted to what Paul de Man[14] sees as the performance or deconstructive properties of all texts.

Read in the context of Butler's notion of performativity, the performative aspects of metaphor, their implication in the organization and production of normative power relations, operate as the very condition of the trope's subversive effects. Thus, the constraints metaphor has historically imposed on the formation of cultural identities can be read in ways that disrupt the colonial and imperial discourses of power and identity which they have produced in the first place. The normative effects of metaphor, as I have illustrated in my discussion of Richards' metaphor of the "Indian thief," articulate the ways in which the binary division of metaphor into tenor and vehicle produces dialectical readings of metaphor and imposes unified cultural identities. In contrast, the way in which the texts I discuss in my study employ metaphor allows us to read metaphor's performative effects. By repeating, misquoting, and disidentifying metaphors of assumed stable categories of cultural identity, these texts invite us to rearticulate the conventionally binary operative modes of metaphor as a performative practice of reiteration, citationality, and resignification. For the purpose of my study I want to emphasize two aspects that make a performative understanding of metaphor useful in a postcolonial context. First, performative metaphors disrupt identity by contesting the notion of identity itself. According to Rinaldo Walcott, performativity becomes one of the expressive modes through which black cultures resignify given patterns of cultural identity because it rejects foundationalist notions of identity. Second, a performative conceptualization of metaphor draws on the trope's traditional mnemonic capacities. In particular, it enables a reading of the various historical and discursive configurations through which specific metaphors have been historically inscribed with sexist and racist meanings and act as discourses of power.

One of the objections we can be make against a performative conceptualization of metaphor is Butler's explicit preference of metonymic displacements to describe the symbolic power of performative practices of identity.[15] Against such an objection it is

possible to argue that Butler's choice of examples largely determines the effectiveness of her theory. Performativity is concerned with an analysis of the effects of naming and a genealogical reading of such words as "queer" or "femininity," of words that misappropriate or impose specifically gendered and racialized identities. Both terms operate as more or less naturalized metaphors as they stand in for political and cultural concepts of sexuality. In particular, Butler's frequent recourse to one-word metaphors and names demonstrates that cultural representation cannot be thought without metaphor. More significantly, citationality, understood as the transference of contexts and references, suggests that performativity entails metaphorical operations. Butler argues that citationality and the "transferability" of gender and cultural norms "calls into question the abjecting power [they] sustain. For a [. . .] reterritorialization of a term that has been used to abject a population can become the site of resistance, the possibility of an enabling social and political resignification" (*Bodies* 231). If we recall Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a "minor literature," we can argue that reterritorialization as the production and displacement of referentiality belongs to the order of metaphor. The operative modes of performativity and metaphor, then, intersect in unexpected forms we need to explore. To show the ways in which we can adapt performativity as a critical device in postcolonial studies, I would like to discuss next how such a notorious trope of power as metaphor can operate performatively and expose the contiguity of conventionally separated cultural histories.

Part I

"Performative Metaphors

Chapter 1

The Word and the Sound: Performance, Performativity, and their Discontents

> They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning.
> In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was
> the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like.
>
> For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with
> all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of
> women searched for the right combination, the key, the
> code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building
> voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it
> was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and
> knock the pods off chestnut trees.
>
> Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.(259, 261)

In these two epigraphs, from the final part of Toni Morrison's acclaimed novel *Beloved*, a group of singing black women seeks to free Sethe, the novel's protagonist, from the violent and all-consuming spirit of slavery, metaphorically embodied in her killed daughter Beloved. Both passages celebrate the healing and ancestral powers of a communal performance. The incantation of Beloved's spirit is a collective act during which the women search for a precise tone of voice, repeat words, and cite codes until they find the "right combination" that breaks the spine and substance of words. But what is the substance of words, and how do we identify the correct combination of words if language itself lies outside the complete control of its users? In the context of *Beloved*, the metaphorical phrase "to break the back of words" establishes a symbolic analogy to the novel's organizing metaphor of the "chokecherry tree" which refers to Sethe's slashed and mutilated back. In the history of slavery, language has been used as an instrument of oppression and inscribed with the experience of cultural deracination and physical torture. In this sense, Sethe's broken back reflects the defilement of language. To search for the

"right combination" of sounds and "to break the back of words," then, suggest that the women must recode the language of slavery to free it from its historically inscribed injurious meanings of black suffering.

The two passages from Morrison's novel illustrate the ways in which this chapter sets out to contextualize the notion of performativity from a postcolonial perspective. The women's collective citation and recombination of sounds, understood as the smallest phonetic units of words that dislocate and produce meaning, symbolically reenact the experience of physical abuse by violently severing language from its dominant and received referentiality. The ritual enactment of violence makes legible the losses experienced through slavery while reappropriating language as a tool of resistance and recuperation. Finding the "right combination" of words involves that the women say things wrong, interrupt the flow of dominant meanings, and establish a community of listeners and speakers that can identify and validate the "code" that breaks the colonial shackles of language. As a collective act of incantation and symbolic exorcism of history that takes place in an isolated clearing, the women's chanting foregrounds the extent to which performances exercise power from an often marginalized position and facilitate communal and social transformation. The chanting's collective nature and its particular orchestration of repeated words, quotations, metaphors, and metanarrational qualifiers can be read from two perspectives that are pertinent to my study.[16] First, it suggests that in a specific cultural context, performances "represent," in the words of Richard Bauman, "a transformation of the basic referential . . . uses of language" and provide "an interpretive frame" (9) through which to negotiate communal relations. Second, Bauman's emphasis on the social and transformative power inherent in performances anticipates aspects of Butler's notion of performativity. Indeed, read from a Butlerian perspective, the ways in which the women's performance in the clearing misappropriates, distorts, and recodes language engage in a performative practice that exposes and resignifies both language and historical discourses of power. In this chapter, then, I want to situate Butler's notion of performativity within

postcolonial traditions of writing and distinguish it more clearly from recent feminist uses of the term performance.

Departing from a brief discussion of *Beloved*, I first adumbrate some intersections between African American literary traditions and the practice of performativity. Second, through a reading of Peggy Phelan's study of feminist performance art *Unmarked*, I suggest a theoretical distinction between performance, a theatrical event which privileges identity models of Self and Other, and performativity, a complex process of identity formation through reiteration and citation. In contrast to Phelan's understanding of performance, I suggest that Butler's concept of performativity foregrounds rather than dissolves the historical and social contradictions through which both performative acts, in Butler's sense, and metaphor, as I read it, operate. Third, contrary to conventional assumptions in postcolonial theory, I argue that orality and performativity, rather than performance, share a number of practices and effects that invite us to reconsider metaphor as a postcolonial performative trope. By drawing from the critical debates about Caribbean performance poetry, I want to delineate an understanding of performance that differs from Phelan's. More clearly, when read in a specifically Caribbean context, the notions of performance and performativity overlap in significant ways and challenge binary conceptualizations of identity . By arguing that performativity, as I discuss it in the later chapters of this study, is contiguous with some traditions of Caribbean writing, I hope to show that an understanding of performativity as a discourse of power cannot be ascribed to Butler's theory of performativity alone. Instead, in many ways the Caribbean tradition of performance poetry, understood as an artistic practice of resistance against colonialism, predates and anticipates those representational practices Butler articulates as being central to performative acts of cultural subversion. Thus, a performative and postcolonial understanding of metaphor need not proceed by imposing a unifying "Western" theoretical framework on postcolonial texts. Rather, I understand performativity as a theoretically hybrid formation, whose effectiveness ought to be examined in the specific cultural and

historical discourses in which it is practiced. The later chapters of Part I of this study discuss how we can employ performativity, as I redefine it here, to conceptualize metaphor as a performative trope in postcolonial theory and literature.

Performativity/ Sound

In the two passages I cited from *Beloved*, the women have to return to "the beginning" in order to free language from the traumas of slavery. The testimonial tone of the women's incantation deliberately employs the sacred language of the Biblical Genesis. Yet, by going back to "the beginning," the women not only consecrate their communal act of exorcising the spirits of slavery, but they also recognize that each beginning necessarily holds an absence; thus, "[i]n the beginning there were no words." This absence of words refers to a founding violence at the heart of the Judaeo-Christian Genesis myth. For the world is created through the divine utterance of the word that substitutes the metaphysical light of God's spirit for darkness, a darkness associated with emptiness and formlessness. God's word is an example of a performative utterance in Austin's sense, a statement that produces what it says.

At the same time, God's utterance entails an act of metaphorical substitution through which the divine word becomes a derivative. More precisely, by substituting "light" for "darkness," God's word erases the ground, namely "darkness," through which it operates and thereby forfeits its claim to originality. The erasure of the metaphorical ground (i.e., of "darkness") brings about a crisis within binary representations because, symbolically dominated by "light," "darkness" signifies a textual erasure that makes God's word and authority a deconstructive case. The effectiveness of this divine performative utterance relies on employing linguistic conventions that make the word authoritative: only by positing him/herself as an ahistorical and unquestionable law can God speak through the linguistic imperative and demand obedience. By citing the first line of Genesis, the passage from *Beloved* underscores that the word or, more specifically, metaphor is produced

within certain power structures that locate it in dominant discourses of cultural representation. Furthermore, the *Beloved* passages draw attention to a symbolic network of oppositional metaphors of primitive darkness and spiritual light that informed and shaped the Western discourse of race from its early modern English beginnings to the present.

"[T]he beginning," then, cites a normative discourse of power, an act of representational violence, which generates meaning through the respective negative and positive evaluation of darkness and lightness. Yet, the sentence "[i]n the beginning was sound" also reiterates a biblical phrase with a difference. From a Derridean perspective, this reiteration enables us to identify the Biblical quotation to begin with. It reveals that the stability of the social and cultural conventions through which we can make this identification paradoxically depends on the act of reiteration and identification. More clearly, the phrase "[i]n the beginning was sound" operates as a form of what Derrida and Butler call citationality, the possibility to sever referentiality from its originating context, in this case the authority of the Genesis myth, and to transfer it into different contexts, namely into the discourse of African American writing. In this sense, the incantation of the women functions performatively and, indeed, celebrates a different beginning of history.[17]

Morrison's novel, then, appears to replace the dominant position of the divine "word" with that of "sound," the collective chanting of the women as a different beginning of history. While the idea of sound refers to the history and importance of African American music as a crucial site for cultural identifications, it neither privileges an essentialist black cultural identity nor suggests an act of identification through mechanisms of exclusion. Instead of reversing received power relations, namely giving "sound" the authority formerly assigned to the "word," sound stresses a linguistic turn from the noun "sound" to the verb "to sound," which refers to specific lexical and grammatical registers of African American and Caribbean language usage. For example, in the phrase "to sound the dozens," sound refers to "mock" and "play." In the context of *Beloved*, "to sound" also

means "to remember" and thus, like metaphor, has a mnemonic function. The women's singing, for example, reminds Sethe of the Clearing where the slaves secretly congregated to participate in the healing sermons of her grandmother. Moreover, "to sound" refers to the dissonance[18] or, in Derridean terminology, the *différance* within words, the "code" of meaning that needs to be found to "break the back of words." Read as a form of citationality and as a term used in African American traditions of writing, "sound" does not privilege the spoken word as the carrier of true meaning but operates at the cross-roads of the spoken and the written word.

In black cultural terms, the women also practice what Henry Louis Gates calls "signifying[, a] coded exchange" (407) of citing and rearticulating meaning. They recode meaning through metaphor to emphasize the precarious boundaries between sameness and difference, history, language, and the body, boundaries that mediate the construction of cultural identities. The women's chorus signifies upon Sethe's broken back, recalling the physical and symbolic scars of racist violence, the fragmentation of language and the body through the history of slavery. In other words, the women transfer and recode the memories and meanings associated with Sethe's mutilated body into a different context of meaning, into the discourse of language production. To break the back of words in order to reclaim language facilitates a ritual and collective healing process of both Sethe's body and her guilt of having killed her baby-daughter to save her from slavery. By naming and transferring the violence of slavery into the symbolic realm of language and music, the women also translate the effects of racist violence into a discursive medium that is subject to change. Signifying, then, can be understood as both a performative and metaphorical practice. On a larger scale, "race" becomes a matter of cultural, political, and historical alliances and, in Gates' words, "an act of language" (402).[19] In various ways, the two passages from Morrison's novel overlap with the techniques of citation and resignification, pertinent to Butler's notion of performativity. They also invite the reader to question the ways in which performance, performativity, and orality differ from and intersect with each

other in culturally specific narratives and contexts. For example, a performance by a white feminist artist such as Laurie Anderson creates and draws from different audiences and social contexts than a performance by, say, the Caribbean artist Jean Binta Breeze. While both of these performance artists question social norms of female sexuality, they nevertheless employ different reference systems, languages, and experiences as means of subversion. In other words, performances need to be evaluated according to the specific audiences to which they appeal and the cultural contexts in which they take place. Peggy Phelan's study of feminist performance art, *Unmarked* (1993), illustrates that while performance acts are subversive for different reasons, they do not necessarily coincide with what Butler defines as performativity and what I, following Butler, use as a theoretical apparatus for my readings of metaphor.

Phelan: Performance and the Disappearance of the Other

In the last decade literary, theater, gender, and queer studies have made extensive use of performance theories to challenge foundationalist concepts of stable gender identities and hierarchies. In performance art, as critics such as Marjorie Garber and Peggy Phelan argue, the body takes on a central role to stage and undo hegemonic patterns of representation through parody, mimicry, and other self-referential[20] tropes. Largely based on Lacanian psychoanalysis,[21] performance theory engages in "avant-garde practices and postmodern experimentations" (Brewer 14) to make visible what is excluded from yet is constitutive of dominant modes of representation. As an interdisciplinary art form based on independent social and cultural movements, performance art is difficult to define. However, I want to distinguish performance from the Butlerian notion of performativity to show the ways in which the latter's emphasis on both the historicity of discourses and the absence of a fully self-knowing subject intersects with some postcolonial configurations of performance. In contrast to Butler's notion of performativity, many dramaturgical concepts of performance[22] underscore that performances expose and mock social and cultural norms

because they cannot be reproduced and are singular, ephemeral, and immediate acts. Phelan's study *Unmarked* examines feminist performance art in photography, drama, film, and political protest acts from a Lacanian perspective that ultimately leads her to articulate a notion of identity in which the Self emerges as an excluded form of the Other. In order to distinguish the notion of performance from that of performativity more clearly we need to examine how studies of performance art, such as Phelan's, risk obscuring the historical and social contradictions out of which performance acts emerge and challenge essentialist identity politics.

Phelan explores the ways in which the representational crisis generated through the asymmetrical relationship between binary Self/Other identity constructions can be performatively employed to disrupt exclusionary practices of gender identity formation. Following a Lacanian approach, Phelan argues that the dual formation of identity functions metaphorically: one pole of the binary code is marked with value and meaning while the other remains unmarked. The latter, signifying the female, is then merged into the former so that the male appears as the unspoken norm through which hegemonic, heterosexual identities are henceforth constructed. Signifying the occluded female Other in a masculine Self, the "unmarked" operates as the symptom of both a normative discourse of power and a dialectically conceptualized metaphorical operation. The process of sublation produces, according to Phelan and Lacan, the "cultural unconscious [. . .] by taking two terms and forming one" (Phelan 5). Phelan calls the failure of the signifier to establish unequivocal referentiality, "the unmarked," implying that at some previous point an equivocal referentiality was possible. Put differently, as the result of a male discourse of gender construction, "the unmarked" functions as the unacknowledged loss of a previous and clearly defined gender identity.[23] The unmarked, Phelan writes, speaks symptomatically, and "shows itself through the negative and through disappearance" (19). It refers to the effaced object that facilitates performance art as an act of disappearance.

In fact, Phelan argues that "performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity[,] [. . .] becomes itself through disappearance" (146). From this perspective, performance and subjectivity are predicated on a subject that realizes its own potential through an imagined Other that partially remains outside given power relations. It seems that the Other, designated as the unmarked, functions as an ahistorical and transcendental signifier: as Phelan points out, the "unmarked is not spatial; nor is it temporal; it is not metaphorical; nor is it literal. It is a configuration of subjectivity which exceeds [. . .] language" (27). As an ahistorical signifier, however, the unmarked operates outside the constraints of power and language. In contrast, performative agency, as Butler understands it, works through the subject's inevitable implication in the contradictions and dominant discourses of power it seeks to disrupt. Phelan further reinforces the ahistorical status of the unmarked by arguing that "performance's only life is in the present" as it can neither "be [. . .] recorded" nor can it "participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations" (146). At this point, Phelan's notion of performance and Butler's concept of performativity appear to be incompatible. For, if performance does not participate in the discourses of cultural representation, it can neither account for nor misappropriate the ways in which dominant notions of gender have acted as discourses of power over time. Phelan's emphasis on the original and immediate status of performance presents performance as a singular and intentional act.[24] Thus Phelan's notion of performance not only differs from the Butlerian concept of performativity but also from Morrison's postcolonial use of performance as a citational and ritual practice of repetition.

Indeed, in Phelan's study the "unmarked" relies on an economy of exclusion and sublimation characteristic of hegemonic constructions of identity. "Identity," Phelan explains, "is perceptible only through a relation to an other -- which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other" (13). By emphasizing a Self/Other dynamic dependent on mutual recognition, Phelan suggests an idealist construction of identity. Further, she

reinforces a process of Othering that is self-consolidating, a process that instates, as postcolonial theorists point out, the relationship between an imperial Self and a colonial Other. Phelan does not take into account that cultural invisibility and disappearance are not always a choice but depend on specific cultural and historical conditions. For example, novels such as David Dabydeen's *The Intended* or Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* dramatize disappearance as a form of either violent social and cultural marginalization or of racial passing, as a destructive act of self-denial necessitated by a racist society. Rather than subverting given cultural norms, the notion of disappearance, when read in a postcolonial context, often signifies an imposed desire for invisibility in order to escape racist violence that internalizes and produces racialized identities.

Performance in Phelan's sense and performativity in Butler's, then, differ from one another inasmuch as the latter foregrounds the historicity of power and acknowledges the subject's complicity with the very discourses of power it wants to destabilize. Rather than acting out the loss of an identity the subject never had in the first place, the subject produces agency from within social norms and must bear the risk of never knowing the full outcome of its actions. While one may rightly argue that Butler's notion of performativity hampers the articulation of political programs, it has the advantage of pointing incessantly at the differences and contradictions involved in building political alliances. Indeed, in the context of non-organized group activism, the concept of performativity helps guard against a secret reintroduction of totalizing and hierarchical principles of political organization, an aspect, as Spivak has emphasized repeatedly, crucial for the articulation of subaltern agency outside official party agendas. Given that postcolonial texts generally situate themselves within and against the historical constraints of colonialism and slavery, we need to examine the ways in which performativity can be read together with postcolonial configurations of performance.

Caribbean Performance Poetry: Orality, Performativity, and the Possibility of Metaphor

In contrast to Phelan's performance theory, I want to argue that Caribbean practices of performance are less concerned with acting out identity than with disrupting colonial and racist politics of cultural representation. For the purpose of this study I understand Caribbean performance poetry as an artistic and cultural practice situated at the interface of the spoken and the printed word. In short, performance should operate as a form of textuality in the Derridean sense of the word, namely as an opening for the production and negotiation of linguistic and cultural differences. Tracing the historical fragmentation and social contradictions of Caribbean identity formation, Caribbean performance poetry draws from oral traditions of storytelling and uses techniques of citation, repetition, and resignification. I want to argue that these techniques coincide with and more often anticipate Butler's notion of performativity. But more importantly, they have the effect of dissolving the boundaries between the spoken and the printed word.

The ongoing and highly politically charged controversies among Caribbean literary critics and writers about orality and its relation to the written word reflect the postcolonial struggle over the decolonization and appropriation of the English language. Although performance poetry existed as an art form in Jamaica before the 1970s, the performers were largely ignored and marginalized as writers. As Louise Bennett, one of the earliest and most influential Jamaican performance artists, says, the critical establishment thought she was "'doing dialect'; it wasn't even writing" (qtd. in Cooper, "Proverb" 22). In 1973 Derek Walcott criticized the folk or "fake" traditions of performance art and stated that performance poets "leave[] out the most exciting part of poetry, which is its craft" (qtd. in Brown, Morris et al 9). Walcott has since changed his position on the topic as the vital use of Creole and patois, understood as the printed version of spoken language, in his own poetry illustrates.

Caribbean performance art, then, historically emerged through and against the restraints of cultural and political prohibitions, including the frequent threat of death and imprisonment. Performed in Creole and composed through proverbs, alliterations, riddles, antiphonal repetitions, songs, legends, and signifying practices, performance poetry was initially considered a low-class, peasant art form reminiscent of slave culture. It was caught in the then dominant division between low and high art. In contrast to Phelan's notion of performance, Caribbean performance poetry enacts the resiliency and persistence of the colonial object, its refusal to disappear, and its historical agency in narratives of resistance and survival. This production of agency through constraints and normative power discourses precisely constitutes what Judith Butler calls "performativity." Performative agency, she argues, emerges through ritual repetitions of norms most often "under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production" (*Bodies*, 95). Indeed, in the late 1970s and 1980s the radical social and political criticism publicly performed through dub, reggae, and other performance poetry led to the incarceration and murder of such performance artists as Mutabaruka, Leroy Calliste, Oku Onuora, and Mikey Smith.

In Caribbean performance poetry aesthetic and political practices condition each other. They enact the cultural and historical hybridity of Caribbean identity through language. With the publication in 1973 of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's trilogy *The Arrivants*, which brings together three volumes of poetry written between 1967 and 1969, experiments with specifically Yoruba mythology and oral traditions became a central but also problematic issue in Caribbean literature. Largely inspired by the poet's life in Ghana, Brathwaite's poetry not only reevaluates the cultural links between Caribbean, African, and African American history, but also assigns a reductive and essentialist African identity to the Caribbean.[25] To appreciate fully the historical and political implications of this turn towards a reinvented Africanization of Caribbean culture, we must read it within the historical context of the French-Caribbean *négritude* poets, the Black Power Movement in

the US. and the attempts of such African writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinweizu to introduce a radical break with English literature, language, and culture at African universities and cultural institutions. However. Brathwaite's emphasis on African roots and orality also brings about a binary division that privileges the presumably authentic value of the spoken word over the written word and its association with colonial oppression.[26] This division has had a long-lasting damaging effect on at least two counts.

First. as Paula Burnett's much criticized anthology *Caribbean Verse in English* (1986) illustrates, a division between the "literary tradition" and the "oral tradition" divides Caribbean poets and writers along an artificial line that does not exist since Brathwaite, for example. is an accomplished writer and performer. Second. the division between orality and literacy entrenches and reinforces the already existing division between low and high culture. Through a reversal of values. performance poetry is thought to express an authentic Caribbean voice while, at the same time. it is marginalized as protest literature. Such essentializing divisions shape the ways in which major postcolonial critics conceptualize the use of non-standardized English variations in postcolonial texts. For example. in their pioneering study of postcolonial literatures *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft. Gareth Griffiths. and Helen Tiffin argue that such English vernaculars as the *creole continuum* "insert[] a political discourse in post-colonial writing" (53). These vernaculars, they claim, function as "[s]trategies of appropriation," for they "seize the [dominant] language, re-place it in a specific cultural location, and yet maintain the integrity of that Otherness, which historically has been employed to keep the post-colonial at the margins of power, of 'authenticity'" (77). For Ashcroft. Griffiths, and Tiffin the use of non-standardized English variations signifies a political and social practice of appropriation that is legible only as a response to colonialism. and reclaims the formerly colonized's right to "authenticity." This view imposes a permanent victim-status on those who use non-standardized forms of English as a medium of artistic expression, and tends to exoticize, for example, the use of the *creole continuum* as the native Caribbean voice. The problem

of this approach is at least twofold. First, it assumes that there is a culturally authentic postcolonial subject. Second, it privileges the alleged immediacy and authenticity of the spoken and native word over an understanding of language as being always derivative and citational. In the context of Caribbean art production such a view seems regressive because not only does it reinforce an old quarrel over high and low art forms, but it also contradicts the historical situation of the Caribbean. Through colonialism, the invention of the "new world," and the experience of exile, Caribbean artists cannot easily draw from an empirically ordered archive of history but, to use Walcott's apt phrase, have to invoke the "muse of history." Such scholars as Benedict Anderson and Arjun Appadurai have alerted us that the imagination and politics—traditionally strange bedfellows—are part and parcel of contemporary processes of cultural identity formation. Thus, to conjure up any form of cultural authenticity appears to be counter-productive to the culturally heterogenuous Caribbean imaginary as well as to the historical particularities and contemporary social conditions through which Caribbean artists work.

In contrast to the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, such critics as Mervyn Morris and Carolyn Cooper suggest that performance poetry is a highly syncretic art form that employs "oral and scribal traditions" (*Noises* 3) as well as the various registers of the creole continuum on its own terms. Both traditions are shaped by the belief in the ritual power of the word to bring into being what the word names. In this sense, both of these traditions engage in a performative understanding of language. For example, Brathwaite emphasizes a creolized concept of the African notion of "nommo," meaning word and name. Through the history of slavery, however, the sacredness attributed to the African meaning of "nommo" changed into a secular tool for resisting the master's language and forging a Caribbean language. Brathwaite writes that "[i]t was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master, and it was in his (mis)use of it that he perhaps most effectively rebelled. [. . .] [T]he word was held to contain a secret power" (*Folk Culture* 31). Thus, names and metaphors have an interpellative and

performative function in that they participate in normative and destabilizing discourses of power. Their power and meaning are discursively produced in history; they are open to change through practices of "(mis)use" or, in Butler's terms, of "misappropriat[ion]" (*Bodies* 229), namely through misquoting and disidentifying presumably stable and dominant references a term enjoys under the present conditions of power. Brathwaite's notion of "nommo" and its grounding in history and language corresponds to what Butler sees as the citational and catachrestic practices of performative power production. These practices, she argues, negotiate the discursive production of identity in language "through a repetition that fails to repeat loyally" (*Bodies* 220). In the Morrison-epigraph, heading this chapter, the women's repetitive search for the right sound to break the back of words, for an appropriate "word-shape[]" (*Beloved* 99) through repeated misquotations, exemplifies the intersection between orality and performativity as a citational practice characteristic for writing and speech.

If the misuse or abuse of words depends on a reiterative process of over-writing, describing, and resignifying dominant systems of reference, the spoken or performed word can no longer be claimed as the carrier and producer of an original or metaphysical truth. As Carolyn Cooper points out, the spoken and printed word are both contiguous and continuous with each other. "For before performance comes composition[,] [. . .] writing and rewriting of the script" (*Noises* 209). Engaged in processes of translation and transcription, the spoken and the written word inflect each other with new possibilities of producing meaning. For example, the sharp reggae rhythms and self-referential qualities of Mutabaruka's poem "*dis poem*" combine oral and scribal traditions in what is clearly a performative act:

> dis poem shall call names names
> [. . . . .]
> dis poem is knives bombs guns blood fire
> [. . . . .]
> dis poem will not change things
> dis poem need to be changed
> [. . . . .]

> dis poem is time only time will tell
> dis poem is still not written
> dis poem has no poet
> dis poem is just part of the story his-story her-story our-story
>   the story still untold
> [. . . . .]
> dis poem is watchin u tryin to make sense from dis poem. (462-63)

These fragments from Mutabaruka's poem demonstrate that the combination between scribal and oral traditions, called oracy, comprises, as Cooper argues, not "the absence of literacy" but "a way of seeing, a knowledge system" (*Noises* 209) rooted in the insoluble social and political contradictions of the history of colonialism and racism. Tightly structured through repetitions and quotations, the poem engages in a citational practice that foregrounds both the illocutionary force of language and the use of metaphor as a performative trope: "Dis poem" (is) "knives bombs guns." Yet, the poem's effect—or agency in Butler's terms—remains unclear. "Dis poem has no poet" because it emerges out of a collective experience of violence; it "is time only time will tell" because the poet can neither foretell nor control the poem's full effects in advance. The tension between the poet's refusal to impose a poetic closure and the poem's strict composition, I suggest, is the poem's performative quality and endows it with strength and hope.

The performativity of the poem, then, consists in its citational practice of "calling names names" and in its refusal to accept that performances are singular acts. Meaning has to be negotiated within and against the authoritative frame of "his-story" which gives rise to the poem in the first place. The story to be told cannot be a new or original one. Indeed, the poem itself ironically claims its status as a representation of a representation because it "was copied from the bible your prayer book/ playboy magazine the n.y. times readers digest" (463). By insisting on its status as a copy, the poem quotes the practice of mass-mediated cultural (mis)representations of blackness as racist stereotypes. Its subversive effects, then, are generated by the iterability of authoritative discourses. While the reiteration of names and nouns engages mnemonic properties of orality, it also produces difference within sameness by disjoining and resignifying conventional chains of meaning. Mutabaruka's

concurrent use of oral and scribal practices moves the oral text close to a deconstructive understanding of writing and textuality. Rather than stressing the originality and singularity of the spoken word, Mutabaruka engages in a performative and citational practice of meaning disruption, bringing together the spoken and the written word. This double recourse to oral and scribal traditions of Caribbean poetry helps him extrapolate the historicity of language.

Both the prominence of metaphor and the frequent metaphorical use of nouns in Caribbean performance poetry suggest that the customary privileging of metonymy over metaphor in postcolonial theory and criticism may be too hasty in that it passes over the productive uses of metaphor in postcolonial writing.[27] Butler reminds us that a performative use of language must resist the "metaphysics of subject-verb formations" and, instead, make use of the possibilities embodied in "present participle" ("Performative Acts" 521) structures. It would be misleading to assume that Butler favors the nominal rather than the verbal functions of present participles. In fact, she seems to read the present participle as a verb form that validates a configuration of agency that does not need to be controlled by a particular agent. The movement from noun to verb also agrees with those African American literary studies that theorize the noun-verb shift as an expression of black agency.[28] It seems to me that allotting agency to only one term of the binary noun-verb maintains an unnecessary grammatical division. In contrast, the multiple grammatical uses of the present participle symbolize the versatility of object and subject positions, of nominal and verbal uses of words.

However, to argue about metaphor in grammatical terms seems precarious. First, we know that grammar and rhetoric deconstruct each other, as Paul de Man so eloquently argues; second, grammatical structures of standardized and non-standardized forms of English are incommensurable with each other. On a most fundamental level, a performative and postcolonial reconsideration of metaphor must account for both the cultural particularities and the intrinsic contradictions of metaphors as a productive rather than

theoretically hampering ground. Cooper ambiguously argues that Caribbean literary criticism needs to reevaluate "the making of metaphor as a kind of literal-minded process of abstracting" (*Noises* 210). As a "literal-minded process" the making of metaphor seems to require a consideration of the culturally particular inscriptions of the metaphor's vehicle or signifier. As processes of "abstracting," metaphorical operations tend to generalize and homogenize. A productive use of metaphor, I suggest, must foreground the ways in which the trope's allegedly intrinsic contradictions have in fact been historically produced and employed in the service of discriminatory forms of cultural representation.

Brathwaite's poem "*Vèvè*" problematizes the "white limestone *vèvè*" (*Arrivants* 265) as a metaphor and ground of Caribbean writing. An untranslated French patois noun, "*vèvè*" is not readily accessible to the reader. The provided glossary explains that *vèvè* refers to the symbolic chalk marks made on the ground before the beginning of a voodoo ceremony. Symbolically speaking, the poem puts the ground or tenor of a metaphor under erasure. Being associated with the practices of voodoo, the tenor pushes toward transformation through ritual enactment. Simultaneously, Brathwaite's poem blurs this metaphor's tenor and vehicle, for it aligns the "tenor" with an "open wound" (265) or physical mark. While the body is conventionally associated with the vehicle of a metaphor, in Caribbean writing the body is not merely the receptacle of meaning but often what produces it. In Cooper's words, the body "intimate[s] the openness of the dilatory text to promiscuous turns of meaning" (*Noises* 8). Similarly, in the context of Canadian women's writing, the body, as Kamboureli argues, functions at once as object and subject, "audience and performance." The body loses its conventional configuration as a metaphor and instead designates a site of voicing so that the subject becomes a "ventriloquist," rehearsing gender and cultural identifications while "reclaim[ing] language" ("The Body" 35). If the body is negotiated through metaphor, as is often the case, we need to read metaphor through the different configurations and signifying qualities of the body.[29]

Although Brathwaite's notion of metaphor emphasizes cultural difference, it also reproduces what Derrida sees as the predicament of metaphor, namely the impossibility to talk about metaphor outside of metaphor. Yet, instead of employing a dialectical configuration of metaphor, Brathwaite implies that metaphorical operations foreground the historicity of the tenor and must therefore work from the historically and culturally "broken ground" (*Arrivants* 266) of metaphor. From a Butlerian perspective, the "broken ground" of metaphor also suggests metaphor's simultaneous implication into normative and performative discourses of power production. As a reference to Caribbean history, the "broken ground" signifies the historical discontinuities and displacements experienced through slavery. The phrase also indicates that the ground of metaphor, as Derrida argues, is marked by an erasure of the body so that the constitutive elements of metaphor, tenor and vehicle, are *a priori* governed by a fragmented and asymmetrical relationship. It is through this "broken ground" of metaphor that postcolonial texts ventriloquize or voice cultural identities.[30] Even though one may argue that *vèvè* as metaphor eventually takes a dialectical turn towards a nativist understanding of Caribbean writing, the significance of Brathwaite's approach to metaphor lies in the ways in which it addresses the temporal and discursive dimensions of metaphor.

We could infer then that, although postcolonial texts employ various operative modes of metaphor, the critical and theoretical status of the trope as well as its productive effects within postcolonial texts remain largely unexamined. Furthermore, to suggest a performative conceptualization of metaphor requires a distinction between the terms performance and performativity. The former term invests in theatrical dramatization of binary identity constructions and suggests that performances are singular, non-reproductive, and original acts. The latter foregrounds that identities are subject to and constitutive of both productive and normative discourses of power. Performative acts reiterate, misquote, and disidentify authoritative norms to disrupt and resignify established chains of meaning. They make visible the historicity and discursive production of meaning.

As a rhetorical and political practice that questions the grounds on which cultural identities are articulated. performativity, as my discussion of Caribbean performance poetry illustrates. corresponds to and cross-cuts the theoretical agendas and literary practices of postcolonial theory and writing.

In the following chapters I suggest that a performative conceptualization of metaphor needs to consider metaphor as an effect of the discursive conditions through which the trope is produced. Such a reading traces the ways in which metaphors are shaped by social and historical contradictions. While colonial discourse analysis conceptualizes metaphor primarily as an imperial trope of spatial conquest. my study ventures an examination of the temporal and mnemonic dimensions of metaphor. A critical reading of Jacques Derrida's argument that metaphors are bound to permanent detours allows us to contest metaphor's traditional division into tenor and vehicle. If the dramatization of memory is germane to postcolonial texts as well as traditionally linked to metaphor. we need to explore the ways in which the production of memory intersects with performative operations of metaphor. In order to articulate metaphor as a performative trope. then. we need to read Derrida's theory of metaphor together with and against Butler's notion of performativity. Since neither Derrida nor Butler addresses the links between metaphor and memory in a culturally specific context. I will also draw from Wilson Harris's discussion of metaphor in Caribbean writing to articulate metaphor in both postcolonial and performative terms.

Chapter 2

Metaphor and Temporality: Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Wilson Harris

I saw an old uncertain world give birth to a new, no less fragile one, and I followed the trail of this book, from the pen of a lonely man to the obsession of another, from ancient lives caught up in imperial enterprise and a world war to these, our times: and finally to myself, and the hidden longings of my past. At the end of it all, I too lie exposed to my own inquiry, also captive of the book.

M.G. Vassanji, *The Book of Secrets*. (8)

The world was ordered magically before it was ordered socially. Ah, secrecy, camouflage and treachery. What blessings to us all. Where I come from, disguise is the only truth and desire the only true measure of time.[. . .] My gifts as a ventriloquist were spotted as soon as I began to speak.

Pauline Melville, *The Ventriloquist's Tale*. (7-8)

the dialect of the tribes will come beating up against the crack
foundation stones of latin like the salt whip speechless lips
of water eating the soft tones of venice

Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *X/Self*. (29)

In his opening address of the 1988 conference of West Indian literature in Jamaica, Derek Walcott states that the "dead fish of French criticism" reeks "of the intellectual veneration of rot." Being only "interested in examining the disemboweled entrails of poetry," "these fishmongers" invaded the imaginary "territory" of "those [. . .] whose religion is verse" ("Caligula's Horse" 141). The territory Walcott refers to is that of "history as one aspect of imagination -- that is, memory" (142). Walcott's polemic attack on criticism reasserts the Romantic view that the poet is the sole truthful and unacknowledged legislator of the world. More interestingly, it also judges "French Criticism" on specifically those grounds that have been of significant influence on Walcott's own work and on that of many other postcolonial writers. Writers such as M.G. Vassanji, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, and Pauline Melville all write against a linear understanding of Western history. From different perspectives, these writers dramatize the absence of originality and the necessity to rehearse and write through, in Brathwaite's word, the "crack[s]" of language and history. The three epigraphs, as I want to discuss them, provide useful points of departure for this chapter, because they allow us to delineate

possible theoretical intersections between the ways in which some postcolonial texts employ metaphor and Derrida conceptualizes metaphor.

Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets* dramatizes the ways in which the diary of a colonial administrator in Tanzania becomes the dominant signifier of colonial rule, and shapes the psychic and personal lives of those who come into contact with it. The various historical detours and "trail[s]" of the book itself reveal the untold stories of "hidden longings" and "ancient lives caught" and erased in the "imperial enterprise" of "war" and colonialism. The diary becomes a metaphor that constantly deconstructs itself through its circulation in different narratives. If, at the beginning of the novel, the narrator is a detached observer subjected to the colonial power inscribed in the diary, at the end of the novel he has become the writer and archeologist of the diary's history and thus the "captive" of historically linked biographies.

Similarly, the quotation from Melville's novel *The Ventriloquist's Tale* suggests that truth sought by literary critics and anthropologists, as imparted in the course of the novel, is a fiction written through the eyes of the colonial traveler and the indigenous people who fool and resist the colonial gaze. In the epigraph from Melville time is recorded as a site of desire rather than as a linear and teleological process. Desire generates memory and history through different voices. The figure of the ventriloquist, who produces different voices by manipulating his or her breathing techniques, suggests a symbolic link between the ways in which the body is inscribed with memory and the production of historiographical narratives. The ventriloquist's speech often appears as a process of effacement through camouflage, of emergence through disappearance. Noting that his "gifts as a ventriloquist were spotted as soon as [he] began to speak," the narrator conveys a metaphorical double meaning of "spotted": "spotted" in the sense of being physically marked by something, and "spotted" in the sense of being recognized as having a specific identity. Thus, the narrator insinuates that the ventriloquist's language invests in the operations of metaphor through the process of effacement and disguise.

While the epigraphs from Vassanji and Melville respectively foreground the detour and effacement of metaphor, the passage from Brathwaite's poem suggests that postcolonial writing proceeds through the "crack" that, symbolically speaking, splits and erodes John Ruskin's imperial *Stones of Venice*. Ruskin's study of the Gothic employs a binary rhetoric that opposes the noble savageness of Gothic architecture to the refinement of taste exhibited in classical Greek and Roman architecture, the historical models of the British Empire. Brathwaite deconstructs Ruskin's discourse by rerouting it through the history of slavery, and by "cannibalizing" Ruskin's language so that *The Stones of Venice* turn into "the speechless lips/ of water eating the soft tones of venice." In Derridean terminology, the *différance* produced in the play between "stones" and "tones" translates the silence, associated with the postcolonial condition, into the creaking sound of words, the dissonance, as I suggested in the previous chapter, that makes coherence, truth, and historical linearity impossible. To return to Walcott's indictment of "French Criticism," then, it seems that some of the rotting fish are quite alive and swimming in postcolonial waters. Nevertheless, we must take Walcott's polemic seriously because it draws attention to the dangerous theoretical and unnecessarily critical division that has come to characterize postcolonial studies. But this also implies that we must examine carefully where and how the different historical genealogies of postcolonialism and poststructuralism can intersect in productive ways. By reading Derrida, Butler, and Harris with and against each other to challenge dual notions of metaphor, I attempt to extrapolate some of the ways in which deconstructivist and postcolonial theory and criticism can inform each other in useful ways.

The Effacement of Metaphor: Jacques Derrida

In his essay "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," Derrida reads metaphor as the founding trope of Western metaphysics. In the history of Western philosophy, according to Derrida, metaphor functions as a dialectical trope that erases the traces of its own discursive production in favor of positing unequivocal or "proper"

referentiality. If metaphysical texts are metaphorical, as Derrida suggests, then metaphor constitutes an ethnocentric "white mythology." As a constitutive trope of Western metaphysics, metaphor "assembles and reflects Western culture: the white man takes his own mythology (that is, Indo-European mythology), his *logos* -- that is, the *mythos* of his idiom [the rhetorical structure of his narratives], for the universal form of that which it is still his inescapable desire to call Reason" (11). In order to analyze metaphor in the discourse of Western philosophy, Derrida contests the trope's conventional division into tenor and vehicle by relating his argument to Nietzsche's anti-foundationalist critique of metaphor. The dominant effects of metaphor, Derrida argues, derive from the "wear and tear" (6) economy of metaphor. The "wear and tear" effect, or effacement, of metaphor refers to the multiple inscriptions and erasures of metaphorical meaning through the infinite circulation of metaphor in philosophical discourses. The production and effects of dead or worn-out metaphors is crucial for an understanding of the ways in which metaphors can operate performatively within a postcolonial context.

In Nietzsche's account of worn-out metaphors the truth-effect, namely the illusion that metaphor represents truth, is characteristic of human morality and links metaphorical operations to a narrative construction of the nation. To order the world according to anthropomorphic and rational principles depends, according to Nietzsche, on the human's "faculty of volatilizing [. . .] concrete metaphors into a schema, and therefore resolving a perception into an idea" (636). Through the dialectical erasure of a perception or of a "concrete metaphor," which is in itself the dissimulation and not the original existence of an object, humans classify, order, and constrain their environment; they "built up [. . .] a new world of laws" (636) which is knowable only in its effects. The truth-effect of worn-out metaphors, then, is caused by both a process of erasure intrinsic to metaphorical operations and the constant circulation of metaphors in the laws and discourses they generate. In this sense, metaphors function, in Nietzsche's famous phrase, as "a mobile army" in the service of truth, designating "a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically

intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage . . . to a nation fixed, canonic, and binding" (636).

While the dominant effects of metaphor engender the values and ideas that produce the illusion of national homogeneity, metaphor's ability to make an illusion appear as if it were a commonly accepted truth or fact requires us to forget. as Nietzsche emphasizes, "that [truths] *are* illusions" (636). The need to forget that truth is a chimera that gives birth to a normative collective "*unconsciousness*" (636) suggests that metaphor orders the psychic life of nations and participates in the production and configuration of memory. For example, Toni Morrison's notion of "rememory" (*Beloved* 36) suggests that in every process of forgetting there remains the faint image of something that had to be forgotten or erased in order to survive slavery. To remember that faded "thought picture" (*Beloved* 36) or the residue of a worn-out metaphor commemorates the moment of forgetting as a violent coercion of identity and unravels how language naturalizes and imparts memories. Derrida's proposition that the wear and tear effect of metaphor "constitutes the very history and structure of philosophical metaphor" ("White" 6) ought to be read as a process of forgetting the violence that precedes the construction of idealist metaphors. In this sense, Derrida's notion of the use, or more precisely the abuse, of metaphor intersects with those postcolonial concerns that seek to dismantle essentializing discourses of cultural representation.[31]

If the wear and tear effect of metaphor endows the trope with its normalizing properties, then we need to examine what is erased in the process of metaphorization. With regard to a performative articulation of metaphor, it is important to ask whether the effacement of metaphor is based on the obliteration of an original or an already simulated figure that appears to be authentic. To examine this question allows me to show that the performative operations of metaphor are not based on a process of substitution, a process in which one figure is first assumed as being original and then simply replaced for an analogical meaning. Derrida suggests that the process of erasure in metaphor "should

always be spoken of as the effacement of an original figure, were it not that such effacement itself effaces itself" ("White" 8). In other words, the original figure which refers to the term occluded in the discourse of Western philosophy or colonial historiography cannot be an authentic figure for two reasons. Theoretically, each "original figure" emerges through exclusion and can be thought of only in terms of another metaphor. Historically, before the advent of colonialism, there has never been an "original figure" of *the* African, or *the* Caribbean, but a myriad of contesting and heterogeneous cultures and histories. Likewise, even before its discovery, the New World existed as a realm of exotic fantasies in the eyes and mind of the Old World. But, as Derrida suggests, "the original figure" always connotes something physical or material before it is substituted for an idea. Therefore this figure

> is not exactly a metaphor. It is a kind of transparent figure, equivalent to proper meaning. It becomes metaphor when put in circulation in philosophical discourse. At that point, the first meaning and the first displacement are simultaneously forgotten. The metaphor is no longer noticed, and it is taken for the proper meaning. This is a two-fold effacement. ("White" 8-9)

Before a figure can enter a philosophical discourse as metaphor, the "original figure" appears, like a watermark, as a transparent impression that possesses a certain material value or property. The figure gradually vanishes and is displaced for an idea which naturalizes the heterogeneous inscription of the "original figure." This process of displacement counts as the first effacement of metaphor. For metaphor to claim "proper meaning," its displacement of the "original figure" needs to be forgotten and normalized through permanent use which designates metaphor's second effacement.[32] For example, while the double effacement of metaphor is at work in dead metaphors such as "table leg" or "body politic," its normative effects have a more immediate political impact in concept-metaphors such as "hysteria." The original physical figure of "hysteria" is the womb, still detectable in the word's etymological derivation "husterikos." In the discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis, the physical meaning of hysteria is overwritten by Freud's concept of

female sexuality in order to denote a psycho-neurosis. Thus, hysteria becomes the metaphor for presumably over-emotional women and shell-shocked men. By using the word "hysteria" as a pathological symptom, we forget the metaphorical genealogy of the word. More significantly, "hysteria" becomes the name for a normative discourse of the human psyche that regulates what does and does not count as acceptable behavior and sexuality. What is effaced and subsequently forgotten through the frequent use of the term "hysteria" in medical discourses is both the original figure of "womb" and the heterogeneous significations of "woman" associated with "womb." In fact, in everyday speech "to be hysterical" still suggests "to be out of control" or "to nag" so that the metaphorical configuration of "hysteria" or "being hysterical" is, in Derrida's words, "no longer noticed" but "taken for the proper meaning" ("White" 9). For a performative understanding of metaphor, it is significant to emphasize that the double effacement of metaphor produces normative discourses of power by hiding its own derivative and discursive constitution.

The normative properties of metaphor, then, neither consist in the trope's structural elements of tenor and vehicle nor in its substitutional operations. Instead, an "original figure" becomes a metaphor by being grafted onto and circulating in various contexts. In this way, metaphor's original reference must be infinitely postponed and overwritten. In the double effacement of metaphor, the original figure does not designate an authentic figure. Rather, it refers to an originary and violent act of naming. As with the double effacement of metaphor, the violence of naming, which is of central concern to postcolonial writing, consists in a twofold process. In a first violent move, the assignment of a proper name facilitates differentiation, classification, and control while necessarily reducing the various meanings historically and culturally attributed to the name. In a second move, the first violent act of naming must be covered over and forgotten. The violence of this second movement entails a naturalizing or reparatory function which "institut[es] the 'moral,' prescrib[es] the concealment of writing" (Derrida, Of Grammatology, 112). Yet, this

double violence of writing also enables the reiterability and citationality of names. It regulates the excess of meaning engendered through the act of naming. For these reasons, names, understood as a configuration of metaphor, play a central role in postcolonial narrative strategies of reclaiming history: They suggest the inseparability of physical and symbolic acts of violence. For example, the violent custom of giving slaves Greek names or of naming the New World in terms of the Old, as Walcott's *Omeros* dramatizes, depends on this double movement of differentiation and concealment that shows that what is given a literally "proper" name is claimed as property. In the same vein, Walcott's strategies of unnaming and renaming reappropriate metaphor as a tool of power.

The violent operations of language, Derrida argues, shape "the history of metaphysical language" because this history is characterized by "the erasing of what is effective in it" ("White" 7). The erasure, or "*différance*" of metaphor, however, suggests an excess of meaning which Derrida articulates in economic terms: "[T]he additional product of a certain capital [metaphor], the process of exchange which [. . .] would make the original wealth bear fruit, would increase the return from it in the form of income, of higher interest, of a kind of linguistic surplus value [the *différance* of and in metaphor]" (7). If I understand Derrida correctly, he argues that the effacement of metaphor produces an excess of meaning, a meaning that exceeds the context in which a metaphor was first used. It is this excess of meaning that keeps metaphor from ever establishing a fixed reference. Indeed, the surplus meaning, or value, of metaphor fuels the machinery of metaphor's overdeterminantion and overproduction, which implies the possibility of a complete break-down of metaphorical referentiality. Paradoxically, then, while the production of surplus meaning is necessary for the infinite production of metaphorical meaning, it also threatens to erode metaphorical meaning, to produce dead metaphors. To articulate metaphor in economic terms, I suggest, underscores the ways in which metaphor has been used as a symbolic commodity of exchange in the history of Western philosophy and, concomitantly, in the construction of Empire's cultural Others and its literal trade of

human beings. In chapter nine I discuss in greater detail the ways in which Dabydeen's brilliant orchestration of the name "Turner" plays on metaphor's ability to "turn" symbolic and material profits in the discourse of slavery.

If, in an economic setting, the production of surplus-value points at the incommensurable class contradictions between the capitalist and the exploited laborer, in the theoretical context of metaphor, the trope's intrinsic contradiction resides in the resistance of the "original figure" to be completely erased. For, a complete erasure of this figure would also cause metaphor to vanish altogether. Like the incommensurability of class contradictions, metaphor's traditional division into tenor and vehicle presents an irresolvable contradiction, a division that seeks to unite what cannot be united, namely two initially separated and entirely different things. The force of metaphor, then, consists in applying a specific value to both tenor and vehicle before they are united through metaphor. This value is marked by contradictions because, as Nietzsche explains, "between two utterly different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no accuracy" (1992, 637). Although tenor and vehicle cannot be dissolved into each other, they do relate to one another through "a stammering translation into quite a distinct foreign language" (Nietzsche 637). In Derrida's terms, the incommensurability of metaphor's inherent contradictions remains legible "in white ink" as "an invisible drawing covered over in the palimpsest" ("White" 11), and is produced by the trope's processes of discursive exchange. Derrida's notion of exchange, however, bears a double meaning, signifying, first, the profits generated through exchange (i.e., *différance*) and, second, the movement of a return implied in every transaction or exchange. The latter refers to both metaphorical movements of transference and translation and the "detours" ("White" 13) of metaphor.

If we read metaphor as a configuration of two incommensurable terms tentatively linked by the possibility of delayed and fragmented translations, metaphor becomes an effective trope of postcoloniality. Yet, in a postcolonial context metaphor foregrounds and arbitrates, rather than erases, the position of the effaced object--the naturalized "original

figure"--conventionally assigned to the colonial Other. To emphasize, the erasure of the "original figure" makes metaphor a profoundly elliptical or parabolic trope, a trope marked by gaps which I do not believe to be arbitrary but produced by culturally and historically specific--and often repressed--events. Indeed, the effacement of metaphor goes hand in hand with the production of a historical memory of violence. More specifically, the traumatic memory of an originary experience of violence cannot be accessed directly but must be traced and imaginatively restaged through the tropes and narratives the subject invents to repress this memory (Caruth 15). To recuperate the history and psychic life of the victim requires what Morrison calls an act of "rememory," of remembering the moment of forgetting a violent event. It is at this moment that the effacement of metaphor--in Derrida's sense--transforms an act of violence into a veritable metaphor.

Read from this perspective, the effacement of metaphor has various implications for the project of postcoloniality. First, it constructs a homogeneous national memory in which certain events must be remembered as being significant to the founding of the nation's History and others must be forgotten to uphold its purged moral self-image (Anderson 1991). Second, the forgotten and repressed acts of violence sometimes resurface in a shock a victim experiences when recognizing his or her own history in that of another victim's repressed memory of violence. Like metaphors, traumatic memories operate through an analogical yet discontinuous process so that memories, as well as metaphors, can be constructed only in relation to other memories. Vassanji's and Lee's novels, for example, dramatize an archeology of communal memories that ultimately rewrites the ways in which cultural identities emerge under historical duress. Third, along with Morrison, I suggest that the traumas of violence and slavery are inscribed in the wear and tear property of metaphor, enabling postcolonial writers, in Morrison's words, to "clean up ordinary words and repolish them, make parabolic language seem alive again" ("Interview" 165). In a postcolonial context, then, metaphor must be reanimated from within the trope's own historicity. Yet, such a reanimation of metaphor cannot perceive of metaphor as a trope that

identifies or equates experiences (Caruth 124). Instead, we must theorize metaphor in ways that foregrounds the differences of experiences that are traditionally natualized through metaphorical operations.

Derrida's notion of the detour of metaphor allows us to think metaphor in terms of difference because it recodes the previously dominant values in metaphor by grafting them onto formerly foreclosed contexts. For example, in Christian discourse a metaphor such as "limbo" refers to the region of Hell where heathens and un-baptized children dwell in spiritual imprisonment. Transferred into the discourse of slavery, however, "limbo" denotes a Caribbean dance that is said to have originated in the confined space allotted to slaves on slave ships during the middle passage. In a Caribbean context, "limbo" not only signifies the collective survival of the literal hell of the slave ships, but also exposes and recodes the double standards of Christian values. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the specifically Caribbean detours of the limbo metaphor in greater detail. Having outlined the ways in which the effacement of metaphor gives metaphor a derivative status and allows us to read it in terms of citationality and exclusion, I will now discuss the ways in which metaphorical detours can be read in a postcolonial context.

The Detour of Metaphor

The ambiguous effects of metaphorical detours[33] hinge on metaphor's simultaneous incapability and dialectical compulsion to return to the proper name. What makes a return to the proper name impossible are the heterogeneous and non-linear movements of metaphorical detours. *Beloved*, for instance, configures the effects and excesses (in the double sense of the word) of slavery in the form of a single metaphor, the "chokecherry tree," which recurs in parallel time frames and is written onto the protagonist's back as a scar of slavery, a sign of both subjection and agency. At no point in the novel, however, is the "chokecherry tree," read as a metaphor of traumatic memory, directly legible or accessible to the protagonist; the value of metaphor's excess (and of history) can only be

negotiated collectively. The protagonist of Morrison's novel, Sethe, finds herself in a situation that she has not chosen but into which she can intervene through her own and other characters' narratives of the metaphor she literally bears on her back. In this way, Morrison's novel negotiates the effects of metaphorical effacement as a textual incision that produces a form of surplus value which enables her to conceptualize metaphor at once "in the plural" (Derrida 1974, 71) and in relation to the other characters' repressed memories of slavery. The "chokecherry tree" indicates that Sethe's character has been shaped by various discourses of slavery and resistance that surpass what can be knowable to her as a subject. The temporal gap between "the time of discourse" and the "time of the subject" (Butler, *Excitable Speech* 31)--the gap between the history of slavery and Sethe's individual experience of it--corresponds to metaphorical acts of naming. For a name, understood as that which constitutes a subject at a certain point in time, is always more and less than what it designates.

Subject to ever shifting syntactical permutations and significations, metaphor "gives rise [. . .] to a *text* which is not exhausted by an account of its sense (a concept signified, or a metaphorical tenor: a *thesis*), nor by the visible or invisible presence of its theme (the meaning and truth of being)" (Derrida, "White" 71). The endless circulation and self-reproduction of metaphor in philosophical discourses facilitate the ways in which metaphor at once produces and obliterates itself. Derrida calls this property of metaphor "metaphorical supplementation" ("White" 18). For, in the logic of the Derridean supplement, the excess of metaphor does not add up but adds to the philosophical or cultural discourses in which metaphor operates. The tendency of metaphor to destroy itself introduces a moment of discontinuity into the trope's dialectical operations. This tendency explains what Derrida alludes to at the outset of his study, namely that the history of metaphor proceeds as a detour, "a journey, with breaks, reinstatements in a heterogeneous system, mutation, unmotivated detours" ("White" 13).

Although the notion of an "unmotivated detour" qualifies the production of

metaphor as an unbound and unrestrained free play of signs. Derrida's text also suggests a different reading. To emphasize that a metaphorical detour presents "a return tour guided by the function of resemblance" (73), he hyphenates "de-tour," thus drawing attention to the ambivalence of metaphor. The hyphenation invites us to read metaphor as both identity and difference. Underscoring the function of difference within resemblance, the hyphenation of "de-tour" reminds the reader that the very tension between difference and identity also disrupts metaphorical referentiality. Interestingly enough, Derrida's text contains an analogy between the hyphenated version of de-tour and a lower and upper case spelling of the second coming/Second Coming. As with the de-tour of metaphor, the "Second Coming" ("White" 71) of metaphor may be seen as an instance of resistance. In the context of Derrida's essay, though, one cannot expect this resistance either to be linked to subjective agency or to be articulated in the concrete and objective conditions of oppression. On the contrary, Derrida's own rhetoric of the West and East posits the function of metaphor as *différance*, but it does not fully attend to the orientalist power structures implicit in his binarism. Although a discussion of the analogy between detour/ de-tour and second coming/ Second Coming may seem finicky and risks falling prey to yet another detour of metaphor, I believe that it helps us to suggest a postcolonial reading of metaphor's infinite returns. The resistance suggested by the "Second Coming" of metaphor, I suggest, may be found on an intertextual level of discourse.

Derrida's description of metaphor as a "Second Coming" coincides with W. Butler Yeats's poem "The Second Coming" insofar as we read it in Chinua Achebe's adaptation as a dramatization of the crumbling of the British empire under Irish resistance. Derrida mentions the "Second Coming" twice in his essay: once to define the de-tour of metaphor as "the reappropriation, the second coming, the self-presence of the idea in its light. A metaphorical journey from the Platonic *eidos* to the Hegelian Idea" (55), and, second, in the context of metaphor's tendency towards self-destruction. To Derrida the "self-destruction" of metaphor holds a "line of resistance to the spreading of the metaphorical in

[. . .] syntax" which first of all "involves an irreducible loss of sense" ("White" 71). Here loss refers to the erasure of the original figure in metaphor's double process of sublation and naming which naturalizes the violence inherent in the proper name and "may denote" the "Second Coming" (71) of metaphor. Derrida's use of the "Second Coming," however, is marked by a contradiction. If metaphorical transference ultimately cannot but dissolve the traces of resistance or difference in metaphor, then the loss generated by this synthesizing process is perhaps not "irreducible." By reading the "Second Coming" as a possible quotation, as the upper case spelling of the words suggests, we can emphasize the notion of resistance and an asymmetrical temporality of repetition inscribed in metaphor. For once, Derrida's own argument that metaphor cannot return as the same but rather as a de-tour with a difference articulates a moment of resistance through the irregular temporal rhythm of repetitions within metaphor. More importantly, reading Derrida's "Second Coming" through Yeats's poem helps us reconsider the "irreducible loss" that lies at the heart of a dialectical critique of metaphor as an agent rather than a result of cultural crisis.

If the de-tour of metaphor presents a return or Second Coming, an almost apocalyptic break-down of meaning, of what has been erased in the originary displacement of metaphor, then this process introduces a non-linear temporal dimension into metaphorical movement. Yeats's poem articulates this temporal dimension as the "[t]urning and turning in the widening gyre" through which "[t]hings fall apart" and "the centre cannot hold." The incessant and repetitive turning of metaphor upon itself widens the contradictions inherent in the chains of metaphorical signification. It eventually brings the contradictions in metaphor into crisis so that the previously fixed relation between tenor and vehicle breaks apart. The transparency of the original figure initially erased in the process of metaphorization becomes legible and iterable as what it has always been: a network of violenty imbued cultural differences, of heterogeneous relations and knowledges. This interruption or break in the established rules of meaning production designates a postcolonial temporality, a "time-lag," in Homi Bhabha's words, that facilitates "the

process of agency both as a historical development and as the narrative agency of historical discourse" (*Location* 191). It is the time of the ventriloquist who recodes the dominant values and symbols of modernity, namely of progress and originality, of the desire for both newness and the permanent re-invention of the Self, in postcolonial spaces. The "turning and turning" of metaphor on itself perhaps implodes and "widen[s the] gyre" of history to articulate identity as a matter of historical address rather than originality. The movement of metaphorical repetition negotiates the ways in which at the moment of social unrest and political upheaval, Bhabha's "signifying present," the artifices of power, that is, names, symbols, customs, dress, language, "come[] to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition" (*Location* 34) only to dislocate the authoritative claim of this tradition and its established system of referential signs.

The de-tour of metaphor, then, makes the linearity of the *grands recits* of history disjunctive in the present and requires us to rethink the value and position of the "irreducible loss of sense" (Derrida, "White" 71). Derrida inflects this loss with a double meaning. First, it refers to the Nietzschean notion that metaphor effects the replacement of physical modes of perception for an abstract concept. Here we find Derrida's edict that the erasure of the original figure is always the transference of a physical figure into a metaphysical idea. Second, the "loss of sense" implies an instant of insanity intrinsic to Reason. More clearly, Western discourses of Reason and Enlightenment were frequently premised on the denial of freedom and autonomy to the colonized, the very values these discourses hold up. However, it is this "loss of sense," namely the effacement of the Other and the colonial obverse of the shiny coin of Enlightenment and Idealism, that opens up the time-lag in metaphor and enables the representation of disjunctive temporalities. Bhabha's argument that "disjunctive temporality [. . .] creates a signifying time" (*Location* 177) in which cultural differences become irreducible because they emerge out of the contradictions of Enlightenment intersects with Derrida's notion that the de-tours of metaphor cause an "irreducible loss of sense" ("White" 71) into the history of Western philosophy.

Now, if the "loss of sense" in metaphor and cultural difference seems to be irreducible, then this irreducibility also enables the articulation of subaltern identities. More precisely, what is named as being irreducible is by definition withdrawn from discursive circulations and thus cannot be resignified. As I have argued in the previous section, however, the effacement of metaphor can be read as a calculated act of forgetting that structures the dominant rhetoric of the nation, a rhetoric in which cultural difference can be used to order and control different ethnic groups and identities within a nation. My argument is that an understanding of both metaphor and cultural difference as being incommensurable can inadvertently further exclusionary and authenticating notions of the nation. Despite Bhabha's and Derrida's important critique of the contradictions of the history of Enlightenment in Western and colonial spaces, we also need to consider that announcing an "irreducible loss" in the dialectics of metaphor might risk reimplementing the authority of the narratives of metaphysics and progress because it once again makes the subaltern bear the failures of Enlightenment. If we assume that cultural differences are to a certain extent symbolically produced by the loss in metaphor (i.e., through the gaps and losses within dominant systems of cultural representation), then we would have to argue, with Bhabha, that these differences "cannot be sublated or totalized" (*Location* 177) . At the same time, it does not follow that cultural differences are always incommensurable or irreducible. Instead, it seems crucial that we trace the historical moments during which certain cultural differences and metaphors gain specific political value.

The quotation from Brathwaite's poem "Aachen," which I used as an epigraph for this chapter, demonstrates that writing in and against the "crack" of time involves further metaphorical effacements that assign agency to the subaltern subject. In this context, the absence of the colonial Other that marks Ruskin's imperial metaphor of the "stones of Venice" turns on itself: the "speechless lips / of water," the histories of Caribbean displacements and deracinations, insert themselves into Ruskin's metaphor by obliterating it letter by letter. The "soft tones of venice" cite Ruskin's metaphor and make it legible as a

palimpsest of Caribbean rather than British history so that metaphorical loss becomes reiterable as a constitutive absence. Further, Brathwaite's metaphorical de-tour to Ruskin underscores that the cultural differences introduced by colonialism can neither be dissolved nor totalized. Instead, they must be read in relation to their historical proximity and to their inevitable contamination of origins. Thus, by appropriating the initial loss of the Other in Ruskin's metaphor, Brathwaite employs this loss to produce cultural identities not through the irreducibility of metaphorical loss, but through metaphor's ability to resignify that loss discursively. It is in this sense that metaphor operates as a performative and postcolonial trope.

If, along with Derrida, we understand metaphor not as a structure consisting of tenor and vehicle but as a movement of de-tour and double effacement, then we must conceptualize metaphor in terms of repetition. From this perspective, the temporal gap resulting from the repetitive movement of metaphor and the specific contexts in which metaphor is used lead me to a performative reading of metaphor. More specifically, the absence in metaphor signifies a disjunctive temporality that enables the reiteration and recoding of metaphorical excess. In this context, both the absence in and de-tour of metaphor produce a differential and temporal surplus of meaning that facilitates the disruptive effects of metaphor. Catachresis, the abuse of metaphor, refers to the possibility that metaphor rather than imposing a dialectical identity on two different terms might convey a non-truth (Derrida, "White" 42). According to Derrida, catachresis challenges the hegemonic functions of metaphor because it works within the same system of language "yet it transforms its [metaphor's] functioning: [catachresis] produces, with the same material, new rules of exchange, new meanings" (59). In a performative practice, as Butler understands it, catachresis provides a strategy for disidentifying and deforming received meanings within the discursive workings of power. Similarly, in the eyes of critics such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, the deconstructive effect of catachresis, namely its ability to recode metaphorical value, has made it the paradigmatic trope of postcolonial

narratives. What is significant in my discussion, however, is that none of these critics directly relates the notion of catachresis to the workings of metaphor. I realize that this is a rather fuzzy point taken into consideration that metaphor pushed to its limits, as Derrida emphasizes, is catachresis. In the context of my study, however, the question of terminology is not altogether irrelevant. While I am in no way objecting to the usefulness and importance of catachresis as a critical device and, indeed, make extensive use of it in my study, I would like to maintain the term metaphor so as not to distract from both the trope's conventional inscriptions of power and cultural domination and its encumberment with identity politics. A performative understanding of metaphor, as I propose it, departs from making visible the normative effects of metaphor. Perhaps we need to come to terms with the inevitability and representational terror of metaphor before we can articulate the trope in catachrestic terms.

To dispense with metaphor in favor of catachresis may not only diminish the productive impact of metaphor on postcolonial texts but also brush over the conceptual ruses and contradictions of metaphor. In his essay "The *Retrait* of Metaphor," Derrida implies that the withdrawal of metaphor, its mimetic folding process, as well as the literal retreat of critics from questions of metaphor harbors political dangers:

> [I]f it [metaphor] gets by without everything that does not happen without it, maybe in a bizarre sense it does without itself, it no longer has a name, a literal or proper meaning, which could begin to render the double figure of my title readable to you: in its withdrawal (*retrait*), one should say in its withdrawals, metaphor perhaps retires, withdraws from the world scene, withdrawing from it at the moment of its most invasive extension, at the instant it overflows every limit. Its withdrawal would then have the paradoxical form of an indiscreet and overflowing insistence, of an overabundant remanence [sic], of an intrusive repetition, always marking with a supplementary trait, with one more turn, with a re-turn and with a *withdrawal* (*retrait*) the trait that it will have left in the text itself. (1978, 8)

The crucial power investment of metaphor, as Derrida suggests, lies in the fact that metaphor determines a variety of discourses without being itself dependent on these discourses. In "Racism's Last Word" Derrida expresses this argument succinctly by saying

that "the point is not that acts of racial violence are only words but rather that they have to have a word" (331). More precisely, in order to effect hate speech and slander, violent discourses such as racism must employ a reductive and metaphorical language that operates through naming, naturalizing, essentializing, identifying, and interpellating a cultural and racial Other in discriminatory terms.

Metaphor, however, produces its hegemonic effects particularly when the trope appears to feign its own absence or *retrait* from discourses of violence as is the case with dead metaphors or words that seem to be no metaphors at all. In "The *Retrait* of Metaphor" Derrida discusses the metaphorical implications of the noun "house" in Heidegger's discourse of language. We could easily elaborate the house metaphor in a postcolonial context by arguing that in V.S. Naipaul's novel, *The House of Mr Biswas*, Biswas's obssession with a house of his own replays internalized colonial norms and anxieties. The point here is that the fallacy and abusive potential of metaphor precisely lie in the trope's invisibility. Derrida, therefore, insists that metaphor "withdraws from the world scene [. . .] at the moment of its most invasive extension" ("*Retrait*" 8). As that which symbolically defines and divides the world into black and white, East and West, acceptable and unacceptable cultural identities, metaphor vanishes, along with the "West," into a globalized world system. In such a system cultural identities and national boundaries are standardized and mobilized to advance the free flow of capital. Thus, while the "West" relinquishes questions of truth and identity to the "rest" of the world, metaphor, as an instrument of knowledge, can leave the stage of the colonial and postcolonial ravages it caused.

The reduced interest in theoretical debates on metaphor, however, should not imply that the "West," if there ever has been such an unbroken entity, no longer fabricates tales of identity and truth. Rather, the point I wish to emphasize here is that in the West questions of identity recur as a defensive and exclusive reaction against increased immigration understood as the after-effect of colonialism and the the advent of globalization or, to

paraphrase Salman Rushdie, as the uncanny return of the Empire to its aging mother-country. To dispense with metaphor, then, seems dangerous, for it reinforces the "*retrait*" of metaphor from the "world scene" and overlooks that the trope still operates as a viable rhetorical means that invokes hostile communities of sentiment in the contemporary resurgence of ethnic wars.[34] Moreover, it neglects a discussion of the interventive and mnemonic operations of metaphor. After all, the uses of metaphor may be of a different political order to those who were dispossessed of their names. From a postcolonial perspective, I think it crucial to keep metaphor on the "world scene" and to situate the trope more squarely in the discursive operations of power. By exploring the ways in which Butler reads the production of normative power structures through Derrida's notion of citationality, the following examines metaphors's ability to act as a discourse of power.

Power and Citationality: Judith Butler and the Performativity of Metaphor

In contrast to Derrida, Butler draws from a Foucaultian model of power in order to foreground the regulatory mechanisms and effects of power, rather than the unstable production of referentiality through language. Butler, I suggest, conceptualizes performativity as a genealogy of violence and agency, facilitating a more politicized reading of the terms Derrida uses to conceptualize metaphor. More precisely, if Derrida argues that the effacement and de-tour of metaphor are modalities inherent in the operations of language, Butler's theory allows us to reread these modalities as interpellative acts. What Derrida sees as the subversive possibility of non-truth in metaphor can be routed through Butler's performative discourse of power. On that journey the absences and gaps in metaphor can be conceptualized as necessary exclusions or "constitutive outside[s]" (Butler 1993, 188) that safeguard rather than undermine the hegemonic rule of metaphor. A performative articulation of metaphor, as I have said earlier, employs a practice of reiteration and citation in order to shift the power discourses metaphor engenders and circulates in. It emphasizes the historicity and mnemonic effects of the metaphorical

production of meaning.

In "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida, as I have discussed it earlier, writes that "a performative statement" must be "identifiable in a way as 'citation'" (326) in order to be effective. The success of an utterance does not depend on the intention or power of the speaker. Similar to the value production of metaphor, an utterance forms a commonly accepted reference by drawing from linguistic and social conventions that establish the utterance as being meaningful over time. A metaphor as well as an utterance becomes readable as a "*sedimented iterability*" (Butler, "Careful Reading" 134) or, to paraphrase Derrida, as a palimpsest written in white ink. It seems to me that Butler adapts Derrida's notion of citationality without introducing any fundamental changes. If at all, she moves Derrida's general emphasis on the locutionary force of language towards the illocutionary effects of language. This move might give rise to the objection that Butler attempts to reconcile two conventionally separated theoretical traditions. On the one hand, an emphasis on the ways in which language effects and regulates social and cultural norms is usually associated with such cognitive theories of language as Lakoff's and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* and favors a subject that controls language rather than being controlled by it. On the other hand, Butler's notion of performativity is a largely deconstructive theory of agency that posits a subject that can never fully predict the outcome of its actions because it is produced through and in language. In fact, Butler takes recourse to Nietzsche and argues that there is no "'doer' [. . .] 'behind' the deed" (134). Butler's theory of the subject invites us to ask to what extent performative agency can be effective in a political context. Before discussing this question of agency in more detail, however, it is necessary to examine why the absence of a "doer" is a crucial aspect of Butler's argument despite the critical attacks this point has raised against Butler's theory of performativity.[35]

Butler's notion of performativity rejects the idea of a stable or foundationalist identity and investigates the ways in which such ideas claim authority while withdrawing from the arena of political contest. To challenge the configurations of identity formation in

terms of Self/Other in favor of a discursive production of identity requires us to rethink the position of the subject. Butler, however, does not dispense with the subject and the critical issues attached to it, namely those of suffering, oppression, and culpability. Instead, she argues the subject emerges in and through subjection to the discursive modes of juridical and social power production. More precisely, authority constitutes and legitimizes itself not through an original and true law but through its "infinite deferral [. . .] to an irrecoverable past" (*Bodies* 108). The continuous and habitual postponement of authority to traditions from time immemorial "is the repeated act by which legitimization occurs" (108). The successful employment of power, then, depends on both covering the traces of how authority legitimizes itself and assigning this authority an invisible yet absolute position independent from the individuals who exercise this power in the name of the nation, the law, God, or other hegemonic narratives of truth.

The most graphic example of the ways in which power produces and legitimizes itself by being at once fully present and invisible is torture. In acts of torture the torturer is not so much a visible but a felt presence; the infliction of pain with its inseparable link to interrogation installs and authorizes the discourse of the torturer by destroying the language of the tortured person. In her study *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry writes that the ultimate effect of torture resides in "the translation of all the objectified elements of pain into the insignia of power" so that "it is not the pain but the regime that is incontestably real" (56). Torture functions as a "display of the fiction of power" (57) and thereby presents a radical site of discursive power production that is linked to both the destruction of voice or language and the positioning and engendering of the body. On one level, then, power emerges from the "deed," the act of torturing, and the need for an object on which to built and demonstrate its authority. As an individual, the torturer or "doer" is a handmaiden of power, both dispensable and exchangeable. For torture to be most "efficient," it must work within a structure of power that disavows the pain it needs to enforce in order to claim an absolute position. Therefore, "[t]he most radical act of distancing" between the torturer and

the tortured "resides in the disclaiming of the other's hurt. Within the strategies of power based on denial," Scarry argues, "there is, as in affirmative and civilized forms of power, a hierarchy of achievement, successive intensifications based on increasing distance from, increasingly great transcendence of, the body" (57). In the last instance, then, normative power must at once utilize and erase the body altogether to safeguard its own claim to undisputed authority. It is in this sense that we can read Butler's proposition that there is no "'doer [. . .] behind' the deed" as the very discursive mechanism through which power is exercised.

Intimately linked to the discursive technologies of power is the question of agency and its relation to the body and language. If the subject is generated in subjection through the discursive operations of power over time, it can, as Butler maintains, "neither [be] fully determined by language nor radically free to instrumentalize language as an external medium" ("Careful Reading" 135). In other words, for the subject to be produced in discursive formations of power and language means that he or she is never fully autonomous but that the discourses that result in the formation of the subject are open to change through "resignification, redeployment, subversive citation from within" (135). Through the iterability of signs, which conditions the production of meaning, agency resides in the possibility of changing discursive relations. Although this notion of agency does not consider the material conditions that, to a large extent, determine the ways in which power is socially and politically distributed, it nevertheless offers, as I discuss in the second Part of my study, opportunities in which to read different languages of resistance critically. While Butler endorses Austin's notion that language itself must be thought as agency, she also rejects the assumption that performative language uses are governed by a completely self-conscious subject. In contrast to Bhabha, for instance, Butler does not foreground the split condition of the subject as an instance of agency. Instead, she stresses that language is a twofold physical act. With regards to a performative reconceptualization of metaphor, Butler's notion of agency is useful because she not only underlines the ways

in which body language produces agency, but she also suggests that "a *figural* substitution makes the thinking of the agency of language possible" (*Excitable Speech* 7).

In Derridean terms, a figural substitution articulates metaphor in conventional terms and refers to the "metaphysical" process of metaphorization, namely the erasure and replacement of an original figure, mostly associated with the senses or the body, for a concept or idea. In Butler's terminology, however, the hegemonic practices of metaphorization establish the possibility of agency because a metaphor produced through the logic of idealism is also a metaphor produced through discourse and thus open to resignification. The excess of metaphorical operations is engendered through the violent erasure and naming of the body. If Derrida sees the transparency of the "original figure" of metaphor as the erasure of a heterogeneous physical signifier, Butler suggests that this act of *"figural* substitution" constitutes the discursive site where bodies are produced or interpellated through subjection. At the juncture where the production of metaphor and that of the body intersect both metaphor and the body become historical situations.[36] More precisely, the symbolic production of the body through metaphor marks the trope with a signifying absence, an absence not only caused by the symbolic obliteration of the body but also reminiscent of the Derridean effacement of metaphor. This essentially physical mark or excess of metaphor pushes against metaphor's presumed capability to generate cohesive identities while generating memory. For example, we remember that the "chokecherry tree" metaphor in Morrison's *Beloved* functions both as a conventional metaphor for the physical mutilations inflicted by slavery and as the site of memory collectively articulated by the novel's characters.

The simultaneous elimination and production of the body through metaphorical processes illustrate the ways in which metaphor generates normative and subversive effects of power. According to Butler, normative discourses of power work through their reiterability as well as "through the foreclosure of effects, the production of an 'outside,' a domain of unlivability and unintelligibility that bounds the domain of intelligible effects"

(*Bodies* 22). In other words, the subject itself does not produce power and cannot be thought of as being constituted outside the normative force of power because the subject is formed by the very structures of power it resists. Were it not for the instability of power itself, that is, power's need to operate through exclusion and thereby produce a "constitutive outside" (*Bodies* 188) to insure its own boundaries and functionality, any kind of agency would be foreclosed. Agency, as I have argued before, lies in the modes of power production because the legitimization and reproduction of authority and power depend on the continuous and repeated postponement of authority to an irretrievable past. Yet, any practice of repetition or ritual reiteration produces what Butler calls "constitutive instabilities" (*Bodies* 10), or an excess of meaning. By reiterating this excess of meaning within the economy of regulatory power structures, the stabilizing effects of power shift their norms "into a potentially productive crisis" (10). Thus, the reiterative mode of power production at once regulates and forms the subject through mechanisms of constraint. According to Butler, names participate in both normative and performative discourses of subjectivity. The performative qualities of names open the possibility to read metaphor as a performative trope.

Naming, as I have argued with Derrida, entails a violent act of reducing a heterogeneous set of meanings to one unifying name. In a further movement, language conceals the violence of naming by instituting the given name as a norm. The latter movement seeks to hide that the act of naming disrupts the production of meaning through language. If metaphorization is an act of naming and functions as a hegemonic trope, metaphor must ignore or, rather, foreclose how its own processes of substitution and transference, inscribed in the relationship between vehicle and tenor, produce unstable meanings. Yet, the effacement of the "originary" violence in metaphor or naming proceeds through the circulation of metaphor in multiple discourses so that metaphor's normative effects result from its repeated and constantly deferred use. At this point we can argue that the Derridean detour of metaphor is not merely a process intrinsic to the operations of

language but a process in which metaphor acts as a discourse of power. The productive potential of metaphor, then, ensues from its hegemonic properties since the reiteration and citation of the effects of its circulation open metaphor towards its own historicity. Moreover, to consider metaphor's hegemonic properties as an inevitable condition for its productive effects suggests that the instability or absence within metaphor is not, as Derrida argues, exclusively determined by the trope's mimetic capacities. Instead, read through a performative understanding of power, the absence or excess of metaphor functions as a "constitutive outside" that safeguards the hegemonic operations of metaphor and facilitates metaphor's infinite circulation and resignification in various discourses. Thus, my point is that metaphor's normative properties and its overdetermination are produced through historically and culturally specific exclusions. From this perspective, the predicament of metaphor can be read as a productive crisis, enabling us to trace and destablize allegedly fixed notions of power relations, identity, and history.

It now becomes possible to understand metaphor's reiterative operations and its production of excess, that is, the trace of the erased body, as resignifying practices. Metaphor, I want to emphasize, is itself a performative trope because it acts as and generates dominant discourses of power. In contrast to Austin's notion of the performative, Butler considers a performative as a product of the power structures it seeks to break away from: "[A] performative 'works' to the extent that it *draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized. In this sense, no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force" (*Bodies* 227). As with metaphor, a performative is discursively generated and therefore legible and reiterable within the historicity of its own production. Both a metaphor and a performative succeed by withdrawing themselves from discursive and political analysis through the constitution of a foreclosed space of meaning production. Like metaphors, "[p]erformatives do not merely reflect prior social conditions, but produce a set of social effects, and though they are not always the effects of 'official' discourse, they nevertheless

work their social power not only to regulate bodies, but to form them as well" (*Excitable Speech* 159). But, as Butler maintains,

> [T]he efforts of performative discourse exceed and confound the authorizing contexts from which they emerge. Performatives cannot always be retethered to their moment of utterance, but they carry the mnemic [sic] trace of the body in the force that they exercise. [. . .] The appropriation of such norms [racial or gendered slurs, doxa that count as reality] to oppose their historically sedimented effect constitutes the insurrectionary moment of that history. (*Excitable Speech* 159)

At this point, the disjunctive temporality of metaphor meets the temporality of the performative. Read as a performative, metaphor and, in particular, the act of naming operate as a rhetorical configuration of a discontinuous history and as an agent of memory. They rewrite the future and give a different meaning to what we take to be the truth of metaphor.[37]

Naming and the Production of Memory in the Context of Postcolonial Writing

For at least two reasons postcolonial narratives, as critics such as Chantal Zabus and Robert Kroetsch point out, employ names and metaphors as crucial strategies to intervene into the dominant historiographies of colonialism. First, traditionally metaphor names one thing in terms of another and thus generates heterogeneous and culturally mixed meanings. Second and more importantly, metaphors operate as cultural and social invocations or, in Althusserian terminology, as interpellative acts that produce memory through their performative ability to confer and to resignify names. Walcott's *Omeros*, for example, dramatizes a historical process of naming through one of its protagonists. In the course of the narrative Achille embarks on a mental journey to produce the memory of an African palimpsest in both Caribbean history and his African name Afolabe. During the Battle of the Saints, through which Saint Lucia passed from French into English colonial rule, admiral Rodney renames Afolabe "Achilles" so that Achille's African name dissolves in the history of colonialism and imperial conquest. Yet, the colonially imposed name also disintegrates and turns into Achille, pronounced as A-chill. *Omeros* exemplifies that names

reflect and, to a certain extent, propel the loops and changes of history and memory. Discursively generated, Achille's name signifies more than Achille knows. At the same time, the reductive properties of the name capture less than what constitutes Achille as a subject. The gap between the historical emergence of the subject and its necessarily limited self-consciousness presents a break in the linear flow of time and the modes of power production. Achille's identity emerges as a genealogy of his name, a genealogy that also reflects the historicity of power. In *Omeros*, Achille's is interpellated repeatedly into different discourses of Caribbean history.

By drawing from Althusser's concept of interpellation, understood as an act of hailing or name-calling that constitutes the subject within a social order, Butler suggests that naming can be read in ways that facilitate performative agency. She argues that prior to being hailed the subject is constituted in relation to the authoritative voice of the caller. The voice that names can only do so by having itself been named and positioned within a network of power relations so that "one is already claimed by the voice that calls the name, already subordinate to the authority to which one subsequently yields" (Butler, *Excitable Speech* 32). Implying an illocutionary speech act, Althusser's notion of interpellation both adumbrates the power-invested utterance of a divine voice and forecloses the time of discourse and the subjective constitution of the caller. As Butler argues, Althusserian interpellation ignores that each utterance is bound to its effects and modes of address. Even if one protests or rejects the calling, one is still interpellated through the force of discourse. Yet, the instability of discursive formations also turns "[i]nterpellation [into] an address that regularly misses its mark" because "it requires the recognition of an authority at the same time that it confers identity through successfully compelling that recognition" (Butler, *Excitable Speech* 33). In this sense, interpellative acts not only produce a "subject in subjection" but also the possibility of agency. As Butler explains--in terms not so much different from Althusser's--the reiterative operations of interpellation inaugurate the subject's "social contours in space and time" and have "the effect of sedimenting its

'positionality' over time" (34), of exposing the ways in which a subject has been discursively and historically formed. Walcott's variations of the name Achille, I think, can be read as a layering of the different colonial and postcolonial histories that shape Caribbean identities.

If naming and interpellation display the effects and force of historical violence, then they also operate through traumatic memories imparted through language or, more precisely, through the mnemonic traces of the body in performative metaphors (i.e., in metaphors that are constituted in discourse and therefore legible and reiterable within the historicity of their own production). Postcolonial critics such as Paul Gilroy consider the temporal disjunction between discourse and subject, inscribed in metaphors and names, as a narrative locus of "loss, exile and journeying [. . .] [that] serve[s] a mnemonic function" (*Black Atlantic* 198).[38] In her essay "The Site of Memory," Toni Morrison discusses how she tries to gain access to the interior lives and memories of her narrative characters. "The image," she says, "comes first and tells me what the 'memory' is about" (114)[39] so that the image or a metaphorical configuration of an image depicts the psycho-linguistic residue[40] of an "archeological site" (114). Interestingly enough, to posit the vehicle prior to the memory itself gives precedence to the rhetorical configuration of memory. In fact, as Wolfgang Karrer observes, "the conditions under which sense impressions enter into storage" determine the configuration of memory so that "[m]emory means the storage place itself rather than its content" (129).[41] In other words, it is through the metaphorical configuration of a traumatic experience of violence that memory is produced and reiterated.

The effects of memory production through naming, however, are normative rather than productive because the violence of names consists in foreclosing the traumatic effects of naming from the processes of symbolization. For example, Morrison argues that the repeated staging of the memory of slavery as something that is unspeakable structures the psychic and cultural lives of black identities only in terms of a collective and oppressive history. The constant repetition of this memory reproduces the violent effects of the history

of slavery by bestowing normative values on such terms as 'racial terror,' allowing for their reiteration in and legitimization of legal discourses. Morrison's *Beloved*, however, illustrates the ways in which the normative constraints of unspeakable memories tied to certain names and expressions can be resignified. With its Biblical reference, the name Beloved functions as a quotation suggesting the impossibility of belonging. It also incorporates the memory of the all encompassing terror of slavery, of Sethe's guilt for having killed her baby daughter Beloved, and her return from the dead. As Sethe's incarnated memory of pain and guilt, Beloved enacts what she names, a smothering and destructive love as well as a dependency on the historical memory of violence and victimization. Through citing and enacting the previously unspeakable inscribed in the name Beloved, the novel commemorates the history of slavery without giving an absolute authority to this history. Read performatively, then, the name and metaphor of Beloved eventually emerge as a memory that has a claim but cannot be claimed and open up sites of cultural agency and identification ungoverned by perpetual victimization.

Similar to Morrison's use of metaphors and names, the Guyanese writer and literary critic Wilson Harris uses names and their culturally heterogeneous yet incommensurable connotations as a gateway to the past and present. In contrast to Morrison, however, Harris emphasizes that metaphor is an essentially cross-cultural trope which works as a "mediating paradox" (3), and "arbitrates with 'unstructured' intensity between all partial structures" ("Metaphor" 2). As a paradox metaphor can never be monolithic because it employs contesting and fragmented images rather than a referential system of tenor and vehicle. While those partial images derive from the specific historical experiences of the Caribbean and the Guyanese landscape, they do not engage in nativist claims for an original Caribbean identity. On the contrary, in Harris's literary work metaphors arbitrate their own powerful effects and provide a gateway to both the unspeakable histories of racial violence and cross-cultural processes of identification. Operating through "partial images" (*Womb* 18), metaphors, he argues, push "backwards

towards hidden wholes and forwards towards new wholes that are themselves, in the past and in the future. unfinished shapes of reality" ("Interview" 105). In contrast to postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha, Harris locates the "in-between" time of cultural difference within metaphorical rather than metonymic operations. Indeed, Harris's insistence on metaphor's mediating ability between partial and metonymic structures implies the necessity to articulate cultural identities within fragmentation and through the parallel time frames of history. Harris's metaphorical reading of the Caribbean limbo dance interweaves the various theoretical threads that establish metaphor as a performative trope.

In his collection of essays *Explorations*, Harris proposes that a philosophy of Caribbean history lies hidden in Amerindian myths, in foreclosed memories that can be unlocked only through the imagination, and in the performative practices of creolized cultures. In the Caribbean the predicament of diverse histories of conquest and survival provide Caribbean artists with "epic stratagems" (*Explorations* 25) that work through, as Harris suggests, the "dynamism of metaphor, the 'alchemy of words'" (*Womb* 10). In Brathwaite's poem "Caliban," the spread-eagled limbo dancer symbolizes the African trickster Anancy and thus enacts the epic journey of Caribbean history:

> stick is the whip
> and the dark deck is slavery
>
> *limbo*
> *limbo like me*
>
> drum stick knock
> and the darkness is over me
>
> knees spread wide
> and the water is hiding me
>
> *limbo*
> *limbo like me* (*Arrivants* 194-95)

While Brathwaite seeks to resurrect African legend and tradition within a Caribbean present, he "overlook[s]," in Harris's words, "the curious dislocation of a chain of miles reflected in the dance so that a re-trace of the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas

and the West Indies is not to be equated with a uniform sum" (*Explorations* 25). In other words, the cultural dislocation enforced by the Middle Passage forges new links that connect the limbo to Haitian vodun,[42] the resurrection of Christ, and to the Indian Goddess Kali. Yet, cultural dislocation also engenders the legacy of linguistic creolization, prompting Harris to pun on "limbo" and transform it into a "shared kind of phantom *limb*" (*Explorations* 26).

Harris's cross-cultural translation of "limbo" into an absent or phantasmic part of the body rehearses a performative practice of metaphorization that reanimates the literally erased physical figure that constitutes metaphor. By misquoting "limbo" as phantom limb, Harris resignifies the normative inscriptions of "limbo," and thus associates it with the slave trade, resistance, confined space, suffering bodies, and the Christian notion of hell and paganism. While these connotations construct a Caribbean identity based on oppression and resistance, they also make slavery and violence legible in their historicity, opening a phantasmic space and time in which the grounds for legitimizing the production of cohesive cultural identities get lost. History is "re-trace[d]" (Harris) through its discursive formations and gaps. The metaphor of the "phantom limb" articulates the body as a historical discourse of loss and possibility. Designating an amputated body part, the phantom limb symbolically redeploys "the mnemic[sic] trace of the body" (Butler 1997, 159), a trace generated through the force of history as an operative mode of metaphor within a specific historical address. That address resides in the conceptual absence that regulates the discourses of Caribbean history and disrupts the compulsion of metaphor to convey a metaphysical truth. To Harris and Butler the notion of absence, understood as a constitutive foreclosure within the discursive formation of power, signifies the possibility of agency. This agency is never singular, but "shared" (Harris), and exceeds the self-knowledge of the subject because it emerges, in Harris's words, from the "*unstructured vision or unconscious arbitration* that mediate between all structured systems" (*Womb* 17). Again, if Harris considers these systems to be partial and asymmetrical in their

historical configurations, Butler would argue that the asymmetry and openness of seemingly closed systems suggest the intersection of multiple discourses of history and identity indispensable for the formation of agency. It is in this sense that we need to understand Harris's rather cryptic articulation of the alchemy of words or metaphors.

The alchemy of words, Harris writes, is bound to a cross-cultural "address of art" and to "[t]he play of arbitrating forces" (17) within "partial images" (*Womb* 18). The metaphor of the "phantom limb," for example, addresses a shared yet dismembered history open to resignification through the articulation of a disjunctive and inner rather than linear time of representation. In performative terms, the metaphor of the "phantom limb" enacts what it names. Further, connoting the pain caused by a phantom limb, the metaphor does not eradicate the sufferings and losses of history but expresses a certain caveat. By addressing the hidden resources of psychic survival and cultural reinvention, the "phantom limb" metaphor "releases unsuspected potential [. . .] to absorb the stresses of genuine change [. . .] and to warn against every beguilement to succumb to age-old parody of imperial family or divine state, and to repetitive cycles of violence" (*Womb* 17). Thus, as a form of address the metaphor of the "phantom limb" reconfigures the modalities of cultural interpellation. The arbitrating or discursive force of metaphor, then, does not reside in a free play of signifiers but in the capacity of partial images and asymmetrical structures to expose and contest the "false [. . .] orders of symmetr[ies, their] extensions and inversions of a binding prejudice and locality" (*Womb* 17).

Interestingly enough, Harris insists that "partial images [. . .] disclose themselves subject to untamed and untamable resources within" (*Womb* 18). In other words, metaphor produces an excess of meanings yet is determined and constrained by the effects of postcolonial history, namely the insoluble contamination of and interdependence between cultures. The "chain of miles" that translates "limbo" into a cross-cultural metaphor, then, reflects the disruptions and assemblages within the chains of cultural significations and metaphorical overdetermination. Read through both postcolonial narratives of history and

their intrinsic modes of operation, metaphors generate the "enfolding and unfolding of cultures beyond tamed vision, or totalitarian caprice and loss of revolutionary soul" (Harris 1983, 18). More precisely, the mediating and productive abilities of such a metaphor as the "phantom limb" are neither infinite nor arbitrary but necessitated by the contradictions and effects of specific cultural histories.

To a certain extent, a performative conceptualization of metaphor, as I suggest it, endorses the de Manian definition of metaphor as a trope conditioned by necessity and not, as is the case with metonymy, by chance. In the same vein, the pressures of postcolonial history and the ethical caveat against the reproduction of violence and perpetual victimization make metaphor a trope that operates performatively by unfolding the cultural crises engendered and covered over through colonial technologies of power. By citing and disidentifying the normative effects of power, performative metaphors resignify and redeploy linguistic and rhetorical conventions to dislodge foundationalist concepts and practices of subject formation. Produced by their movement of erasure and absence, performative metaphors work through a constitutive foreclosure that is marked by a violent subjection of the body. To express and enact that foreclosure produces memory and agency in a communal act. By bringing together different theorists and literary critics, this chapter has made the attempt to engage in a communal reading across the critical divide between postcolonial and Western critics and theorists. While a performative understanding of metaphor illustrates some of the ways in which post-structuralist, Western feminist, and postcolonial criticism can be employed in mutually informative ways, it also points at the ways in which a postcolonial context modifies terms such as "absence," "metaphorical effacement," or "constitutive outside." If metaphors operate performatively and provide a crucial postcolonial narrative strategy to access history and generate memory, we need to examine the ways in which performative metaphors can be read in such postcolonial key discourses as nation narration and cultural difference.

Chapter 3

Metaphor and Homi Bhabha

It was a theorem of some kind, more and more difficult as he rose and walked to the open belly of the piano, plucking the strings in the same cluster as with his fingers depressing keys. [. . .] Lone notes, deterring them in the middle, tolerant; patience darkened by the clustered ruptures. She felt herself plunge into the theorem [. . .]. Here she rode, swam a liquid distance. Air dripping from her shoulders [. . .]. Jazz concerts always threw her into a pit of a mood. After, she would come out, a wry smile jerking the muscles of her face, as if some accustomed tragedy had occurred. It had been replayed; an escape had been rehearsed and outside nothing had changed.

Dionne Brand, "Train to Montreal." (15, 17)

In this chapter I want to investigate the role Bhabha ascribes to metaphor in his influential concepts of cultural difference and nation formation. Bhabha's work provides a useful point of departure for a reading of metaphor in a postcolonial context because it considers nation formation as a symbolic and narrative process. This process is largely governed by the ways in which one addresses or is addressed by the nation's laws and authoritative discourses of power. If the nation is understood as a narrative process, however, the question of how metaphor participates in or even produces concepts of nationhood becomes imperative. Bhabha argues that in the practice of nation narration, postcolonial agency cannot be engendered through metaphor, but is generated through the textual and performative configurations of repetition, metonymy, and catachresis. In the past, Bhabha's structuralist and Lacanian signature has provoked considerable and controversial criticism from such postcolonial critics as Arif Dirlik, Aijaz Ahmad, Benita Parry, Ania Loomba, Anne McClintock, and Leela Ghandhi. To different degrees, many of the reservations held against Bhabha's methodology are justified . For the purposes of my study, however, I merely want to point out that none of these critics questions the ways in which Bhabha employs both metaphor and the notion of performativity to articulate hybrid diasporic identities.

If nation formation, as Bhabha aptly suggests, employs specific rhetorical strategies

to designate and to contain dominant and dissenting groups within the nation, then it seems crucial to specify the ways in which metaphor operates. To talk about metaphor without talking about its operative modes in a postcolonial context risks that we unknowingly adapt rhetorical practices of nation narration that totalize cultural differences. For this reason, I want to examine the extent to which Bhabha's concepts of cultural difference and nation narration draw from a Jakobsonian division between metaphor and metonymy. This is not to say that I deny the disruptive effects through which metonymy undermines dominant Western narratives of history and identity in various postmodern and postcolonial texts. Rather, I take issue with Bhabha's tendency to privilege one trope over the other and to ignore that metaphor, when, for example, read through Harris's notion of the *caveat*, can be conceptualized in ways that destabilize dominant narratives of the nation. Moreover, we need to investigate the theoretical implications of the ways in which Bhabha differentiates between a pedagogical, read authoritative, and performative, read disruptive, practice of nation narration. The former, Bhabha argues, proceeds primarily through metaphor while the latter operates through metonymy. It is my contention that such a division is artificial and imposes a structural understanding of the operative modes of metaphor and metonymy on processes of nation narration. When articulated in performative ways, metaphor's operative modes produce heterogeneous narratives of the nation and disrupt normative discourses of the nation. To illustrate some ways in which postcolonial texts use metaphor to address questions of nation narration and cultural difference, this chapter begins with a reading of Dionne Brand's short story "Train to Montreal."

Brand's short story "Train to Montreal," from which the epigraph of this chapter is taken, deals with several loosely strung together episodes in the life of the story's female, nameless protagonist. A jazz concert, a trainride to Montreal, and a racist assault upon arrival in Montreal provide the events through which the story dramatizes the effects and practices of the continuous history of racism and violence in Canada. The opening of the story describes the play of a jazz pianist as a "difficult," "depressing," and "disturb[ing]"

arrangement of notes that resembles an unidentifiable "theorem." Associated with scientific speculation, the term theorem symbolically acts as a metaphor for the effects of racist stereotypes and the systematic discrimination against people of color, which, in the eyes of the protagonist, links the Canadian past with the present. The rehearsal and recitation of the memories of slavery and oppression, inscribed in the jazz music the protagonist listens to, evoke the pain of this past, a pain that expresses itself in the "jerking" of the protagonist's body. Having boarded the train to Montreal to visit her lover, the protagonist feels threatened by her fellow passengers in general and by a group of children singing nursery rhymes in particular. To her the children's chanting "[w]ops and frogs, Montreal is full of dogs" forebodes the racist verbal attack of "[w]ops and niggers" (24). She falls into a "nervous sleep" from which she awakes with the faint memory of "a stone and the sea, clusters, notes of water" (25). When the train finally pulls into the station, the protagonist tries to escape the chaos of arrival but gets caught in a group of drunken men in whom she "recogniz[es] something of the raucousness of the children, something violent, something which her senses had become attuned to over the years" (26). Then one of the men names her, yelling at her repeatedly "'Nigger whore!'" (27), but the woman is unable to react and is left with a feeling of utter powerlessness and remorse: "*I should have yelled and screamed. I should have answered, cursed, smashed his mouth. I should have killed him*" (28). How, then, can we relate Brand's short story to the performative operations of metaphor and to Bhabha's concepts of nation narration and cultural difference?

Brand's short story, as I have briefly sketched it, raises a number of issues that are also central to Bhabha's theoretical interest in constructing a historical portrait of the psychology of migrancy and of those who have suffered colonial oppression. Both depart from the Fanonian notion that the condition of the colonized is a nervous, schizophrenic condition torn between a shattering impotence, the loss of language, and the desire for violently taking the place of the oppressor. To both the decisive moment of racist dispossession and violence resides in an act of misrecognition and simultaneous

interpellation encapsulated in the by now famous Fanonian expression: "Look, a Negro!" (*Black Skins* 111). The protagonist of Brand's story identifies this moment of racist interpellation with the raucous behavior of the children in the train. She experiences what Fanon considers to be both the damaging result of the child's scream and the internalization of this violent act of naming as a mode of self-identification, namely the disintegration and substitution of "[t]he *corporeal* schema" for "a racial *epidermal* schema" (112). While Bhabha reads this primal scene of postcolonial subject constitution within a Freudian and Lacanian frame to foreground the rhetorical ambivalence and interventive operations of stereotypes and cultural mimicry, Brand's story suggests that the psychic life of those who suffer from racist violence cannot be read easily through such a frame. Bhabha, as I will discuss later, both articulates postcolonial subjectivity as a disruptive presence of Otherness in the imperial Self and suggests that postcolonial agency works through mimicry. The inability of Brand's protagonist to respond to her attackers illustrates that racist violence often leaves the victim paralyzed. Brand's story, I think, emphasizes that to participate in the narrative of the nation presupposes the existence of a voice through which to address and respond to dominant notions of the nation in a direct way. Metaphor, I want to argue in this chapter, can be employed to underscore the tensions and contradictions involved in nation narration. Moreover, it provides a narrative device that draws attention to the gaps and muted voices that make nation narration an elliptical process.

The racist interpellation of Brand's protagonist and the metaphorical description of the piano music as a theorem, then, evoke collective and individual memories of racist and sexist violence in the mind of the protagonist. In contrast to Bhabha, Brand inflects Fanon's notion of a generically male interpellation of racialized bodies ("Look, a Negro!) with the sexual exploitation and abuse of black women enshrined in the white man's assault "Nigger whore!" Furthermore, in both his early and his later essays Bhabha perceives subaltern psychology in terms of a "strategy of disavowal" that commands "the acknowledgment of difference" (*Location* 115) through mimicry. To Bhabha mimicking

the colonizer's desire for the Other as either an effaced part of the Self, namely as an exotic fetish, or "*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" implies a metonymic practice of agency (86). For, through its partial operations of displacement metonymy symbolizes a split discourse of authority that makes all forms of colonial representations legible as signs of ambivalence. Metonymy becomes the rhetorical device of mimicry, conveying the hybrid condition of cultural identifications and "terroriz[ing] authority with the *ruse* of recognition [and] mockery" (Bhabha 1994, 115). As with much of the criticism that has been leveled against Bhabha's view of subaltern agency, Brand's story illustrates that subaltern agency is often foreclosed by a stifling loss of language.

Similar to Morrison's approach toward the representation of the inner lives of slaves, Brand's narrative articulates the psychic effects of racist violence through a scattered structure of metaphors. With the exception of the metaphor of the theorem, the story's metaphors of the piano belly, the "notes of water," and the "[a]ir dripping from the woman's shoulder" all struggle with expressing something unspeakable, something inscribed in the memory of the explicitly female body. Although the symptomatic speech of these metaphors does not reveal an essential and recoverable origin of traumatic violence, the metaphors regulate the psychic life and perception of the protagonist. If we read the jazz performance the woman attends at the beginning of the story as a reflection of black culture and history, the metaphor of the theorem acquires a meaning that disrupts the authority of a historical memory based exclusively on a collective unconscious of suffering. Being both a symbol and a hypothesis that must be verified by a chain of reasoning, a theorem has no claim to truth. In fact, what must be verified are assumptions which appear to be true through their perpetual reiteration. In this sense, a theorem works like a performative in Butler's sense. It mirrors the ways in which the history of racism is produced within chains of significations that are repeated in various discourses and thus passed off as truths under the guise of tradition. In the story, the theorem of racism refers to the perpetually reiterated historical and discursive construction of race that makes "race" appear to be a natural and

veritable phenomenon. The theorem of race is repeated and thus authorized through the protagonist's immediately hostile and defensive reaction to the children, her categorization of other train passengers into allies and enemies, and her coupled aggression and frustration about her inability to respond to the racist attack and the indifference of the bystanders who observe the attack. In each of these instances, race functions as an internalized and naturalized truth. She is victimized by direct racist violence and the internalization of this violence. The latter not only keeps her a prisoner of the theorem of race, but paradoxically forces her to reconfirm the authority of this theorem. At the same time, the improvised rhythms of jazz reconfigure the theorem of racism as "clustered ruptures, " signifying that the history of race cannot be reduced to a history of victimization. It also implies that the truth the protagonist attaches to the theorem of race is not as fixed as she believes it to be. Rather, as "clustered ruptures," the metaphor of the theorem suggests that race is less a natural than a discontinuous and discursive formation of identity, open to resignification. On the one hand, the metaphor of the theorem illustrates the contradictions between a naturalized and discursive understanding of race, underscoring the disruptive effects of metaphor. On the other, the normalizing connotations of the theorem metaphor mediate the ways in which race, perceived as a naturalized category of identity, shapes the psychic condition and socially isolated position of the protagonist in a racist society. The metaphor of the theorem, then, invites us to examine to what extent Bhabha's conceptualization of metaphor as an exclusive trope of power in the narrative practices of the nation can account for the simultaneously normalizing and disruptive effects Brand's story ascribes to metaphor.

Metonymy and Metaphor in Bhabha's Colonial Discourse Analysis

In his two essays "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" (1983) and "Representation and the Colonial Text" (1984), Bhabha examines the constitutive elements of colonial discourse. He argues that colonial discourse constructs

cultural Otherness in terms of a division between colonial Self and Other in which the Other is defined in terms of the Self. Formalist reading practices of literary texts reinforce this form of cultural identity construction by maintaining the received critical division between reality and appearance. Subsequently, colonial and postcolonial literary texts are turned into a "given reality—which as the essential, original source determines the form and action of its *means* of representation [. . .] [and] is not seen as *productive* of meaning but essentially reflective and expressive[,] [. . .] a form of recognition" ("Representation" 99-100). A division between "true" reality and representational appearance assumes that postcolonial texts are essentially realist texts that reflect rather than represent an essential truth about cultural identities. Because such a reading practice implies pre-packaged ideas and values about dominant and marginalized cultural identities, it tends to construct a universal discourse about literature and reads cultural, historical, and material differences in terms of the critic's unacknowledged ideals and criteria of what comprises valuable literature. Bhabha rightly argues that the doctrine of reality and appearance both ignores the fictitious status of reality and privileges "the signified as independent of the *means* of representation" (1984, 104). Critics, Bhabha implies, consider the content of a postcolonial text as an allegorical truth and semantic depth regardless of the narrative and aesthetic strategies these texts employ to undermine their "message." Bhabha's argument is important because it invites an analysis of the ways in which such tropes as metaphor and metonymy exercise a destabilizing force in postcolonial texts.

Bhabha questions how texts gain and articulate a certain materiality, namely their fissures and contradictions, in colonial discourse. The answer he puts forth in "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" constitutes the core argument of his later texts. He argues that colonial discourse embodies an intricate network of recognition and disavowal based on the psychology of the fetish or the stereotype. To Bhabha both terms relate to each other on an analogical basis and operate at once through metaphor and metonymy."Within discourse," Bhabha explains, "the fetish represents the simultaneous

play between metaphor as substitution (masking absence and difference) and metonymy (which contiguously registers the perceived lack)" (202). The colonial Other becomes an Other by being constructed as a fetish, as a division within the Self of the colonizer. Incorporated in the colonizer's Self, both the colonial Other and the imperial Self are marked by a split identity "predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense" (202). Bhabha further suggests that this Othering of the Self takes place in what he calls "Fanon's primal scenes" (204), namely the effect of recognition and misrecognition of the colonial interpellation "Look , a Negro!".

At this point, Bhabha shifts Fanon's crucial emphasis on the violent effects of racist interpellation from the colonized's distorted self-image of his or her body to the colonizer's processes of identity construction. Bhabha seems to be more interested in the ways in which the (un)naming of the colonized conveys agency to the colonial interpellator rather than in the ways in which the effect of this interpellation, namely the symbolic obliteration of the colonized's body, produces resistance within the colonized. In Bhabha's reading of this interpellation the possibility of resistance consists in the unstable self-identifications of the colonizer, and not in the loss of the colonized's body. In fact, the loss of the colonized's body signifies the fetishistic economy of lack and substitution.[43] In this economy the colonized, as Varadharajan warns us, risk being nothing but "the elided difference *within* the imperialist self" (*Exotic*, xi). According to Bhabha, however, the psychological split at the heart of the imperial Self (i.e., the Self's knowledge of difference implied in "Look, a negro" and the simultaneous desire to identify with and to disavow this difference) suggests the possibility of colonial resistance because the disavowed presence of the Other in the imperial Self turns every attempt at representing a homogeneous imperial identity and authority into a failure.[44] The disavowal of the Other in the Self is then sublimated by the appearance of the stereotype.

Originating in Lacan's notion of the Imaginary, discourses on stereotypes combine narcissistic and aggressive images of misconceived self-identifications to construct a

division into a viable Self/ inside and an unlivable Other/ outside. According to Bhabha, these dualisms are articulated in the complementary movements of metaphor and metonymy. As he writes, discourses of stereotypes and colonialism link "the metaphoric or masking function of the fetish and the narcissistic object-choice and an opposing alliance between the metonymic figuring of lack and the aggressive phase of the Imaginary" ("Difference" 204). While the operations of the fetish provide a productive device for the analysis of colonial psychology, they seem reductive when employed in reading postcolonial texts. Bhabha departs theoretically from the structuralist assumption that language comprises a *system* of differential signs punctuated by the functional differences between metaphor as substitution and selection and metonymy as displacement. What seems reductive in this understanding of metaphor and metonymy is that metaphor always functions as a symptom that points towards an originary and decipherable repression while metonymy configures the repressed colonial subject in no other terms than desire and lack.

Although he maintains the structuralist definitions of metaphor and metonymy, Bhabha seeks to undo their binary relationship through his recourse to poststructuralist psychoanalysis. Like Lacan, Bhabha argues that the totalizing effects of metaphor are always destabilized by the metonymic configurations of desire and lack. In this way the binary division between metaphor and metonymy dissolves and metaphor loses its dominant position. This strategy tends to undo or often to reverse the *presupposed* binary relation between metaphor and metonymy. Yet, it does not as easily overcome the hegemonic functions of metaphor because it does not reconsider the operative modes of metaphor. Put differently, although Bhabha uncouples the dual relationship between metaphor and metonymy, he reads metaphor and metonymy in Jakobsonian terms as tropes of substitution and displacement and contiguity respectively. What are the results then of Bhabha's definition of metaphor not as a process of substitution and selection but as one of difference and resemblance? Is it possible to read the metaphorical movement of substitution and selection in ways that contribute to postcolonial rather than exclusively

colonial discourses?

Even if we adapt Bhabha's position and read metaphor through Lacanian psychoanalysis, we need to question why Bhabha insists on a definition of metaphor as a trope of substitution. Although Bhabha emphasizes that metaphor can work metonymically, his notion of metaphor and metonymy generally follows Jakobson's argument that metaphor substitutes one set of meanings for another while metonymy recombines meanings. To Bhabha, the problem of metaphor consists in metaphor's tendency to reinforce and totalize an original set of meanings. If, as I have argued in the previous chapter, metaphor does not exclusively operate through substitution but through reiteration and citation, metaphor no longer returns to or synthesizes a specific set of meanings. Moreover, if we employ a slightly shifted interpretation of Lacan's conceptualization of metaphor, we may be able to think metaphor's operative modes in terms of difference rather than substitution without leaving the psychoanalytical framework of Bhabha's argument. Juliet Flower MacCannell advances a critical reading of Lacan's notion of metaphor as a symptom and as a process of selection which, by definition, foregrounds metaphor's differential and metonymic modes of operation. By proposing that all processes of selection entail a form of value-judgment and thereby a form of exclusion, MacCannell implies that the constitutive element in the selection process of metaphor is also a negation. Lacan's contribution to the discourse of metaphor, she argues, consists in "showing how the negative side of metaphor—its ability to distinguish and discard, cut off, select etc.— becomes a *determinant* of the social ties (discursive forms) between human beings. [. . .] In short, [metaphor] becomes ideology" (91), a trope of power. To Lacan, however, the "negative side of metaphor," namely its surplus value, does not signify a possibility of intervening into the totalizing operations of metaphor. Instead, from a Lacanian perspective, MacCannell writes, metaphor's excess designates neither a Derridean *différance* nor a temporal gap, but is "fictitious, a cover-up for [metaphor's] essential negativity, its barrenness" (98). While Lacan's notion of metaphor foregrounds the trope's

repressive functions, the absence in metaphor remains an ahistorical difference. Insofar as metaphor conceals its own ideological functions, we can say that it is open to a performative interpretation. For, in Butler's words, it "*draws on and covers over the constitutive conventions by which* [they are] *mobilized*" (*Bodies* 227). Only by presupposing that one can live outside of power and its effects of ideology, that power is a non-discursive force, is it possible to conceptualize the negativity in metaphor as an exclusively disempowering space. Texts such as Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and David Dabydeen's *Turner*, however, dramatize the negativity or absence in metaphor and make it a driving force of the postcolonial process of resignification. This also concurs with MacCannell's critique of Lacan's use of metaphor in which she anticipates Butler's notion of the performative by stating that "[m]etaphor powers as well as empowers" (114).

The effectiveness of Bhabha's theory of a subversion of colonial power based on the fetishistic split in the identification processes of the imperial Self also depends on the ways in which we conceptualize metaphor. What Bhabha's approach forecloses is the possibility that the native might oppose or resist to be incorporated in the colonizer's perception of an imperial Self. Moreover, an alignment of metaphor with both Lacanian and Jakobsonian theory overlooks that those theories develop a limited perspective on metaphor. As Gérard Genette points out, Jakobson must be criticized for "his surreptitious extension of a (rhetorical) concept of metaphor to the totality of (linguistic) relations of selection and . . . of the concept of metonymy to the totality of relations of combination" (124, n.27). Although Genette's own reading of metaphor cannot account for Derrida's claim that all language functions metaphorically, it is useful because it returns our attention to the ways in which metaphor operates in specific contexts rather than as a linguistic principle. Genette, I think, shifts Jakobson's schematic reading of metaphor back to a classical definition of metaphor as an implicit comparison.[45] But, metaphor, as Genette realizes, cannot entirely function as a comparison because the two compared elements of a

metaphor, the tenor and vehicle, are inscribed with a multiplicity of meanings that make an unmistakable comparison impossible. That metaphor always escapes an unequivocal definition, however, enables Genette to consider the metaphoric structure of texts as a palimpsest so that texts are marked by metaphors that have been constantly described and inscribed and offer access to an "involuntary memory" (204). In contrast to Bhabha, Genette does not emphasize the movement of substitution in metaphor, but its "simultaneous operation of [. . .] resemblance and difference." This double movement of metaphor generates a tendency towards "'assimilation' and a resistance to this assimilation, without which there would be a sterile tautology." Therefore, Genette infers, it seems likely that metaphor resides "on the side that differs and resists, on the irreducible and *refractory* side of things" (208).

Bhabha's analysis of V.S. Nailpaul's house metaphor in *A House for Mr Biswas*, for example, exclusively considers the repetitive modes of metonymy as being constitutive for cultural change and agency ("Representation"). Although his argument for metonymy has been important at the time, he appears to overlooks that the reiterative operations of metaphor need not repeat the same. Instead, they negotiate the fallacies and necessities of metaphor as a translational movement held in suspense, namely as a movement of repeated detours. The necessity for a reconceptualized form of metaphor in postcolonial narrative perhaps lies in the need for a device that states the conflict-ridden and heterogeneous presence of the colonial object who must constantly ward off what Sara Suleri, in her reading of Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, calls "the excessive literalism or [. . .] excessive metaphoricity of [his or her] racial body" (163). In a broader sense, to exclude metaphor from postcolonial discourse may unwittingly circumvent its own interest of negotiating cultural difference and erode the discourse's necessary political meta-narrative. As David Simpson remarks, the avoidance of metaphor and privileging of metonymy favors "[t]he principle of non-contradiction" (191). He argues that "[m]etonymy [. . .] is the trope of self-sufficient independence: each person or thing is imaged by a part [or]

attribute of himself" and produces a "non-competitive series" (1990, 191) of parts. From this perspective, Bhabha's critique that dominant criticism reduces the colonial subject to pluralist "*different representations*" rather than analyses "*difference*" (1984, 106), turns back onto itself. Bhabha, then, criticizes the dominant practices of colonial representation while taking for granted a rhetorical terminology based on both the division between metaphor and metonymy and the subsequent privileging of metonymy in postcolonial theory.

Bhabha's Discourse of the Nation: The Performative and the Pedagogical

Bhabha's seminal essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" raises further questions about his treatment of metaphor in the context of nation formation. The merits of the essay are manifold. It carves out a space for subaltern articulations and representations of and through cultural difference. It also rethinks hegemonic concepts of the nation and modern national time in a non-linear and disjunctive time frame. The nation, according to Bhabha, is a matter of competing cultural discourses and forms of political address. The postcolonial condition of the nation resides in a perpetual arbitration of power through the tension between legal and discriminatory practices of state policies and the erosion and modification of clearly fixed national boundaries and identities through diasporic cultures and global migrancy. Bhabha's essay, however, has been criticized for its methodological approach. As Moore-Gilbert observes, Bhabha "reinscribes a whole series of binary oppositions between (neo-)colonial and postcolonial culture." While Bhabha seems to associate the "West" with "writing, the symbol, pedagogy (all of which denote monological, fixed and authoritarian qualities)," he presents postcolonial cultures as "the 'text', the voice, the sign, performance (all of which denote dialogical, democratic and mobile properties)" (Moore-Gilbert 128-29).

In the same vein, Bhabha, as I wish to argue, founds his notion of the nation and cultural difference on a binary relationship between metaphor and metonymy, the

pedagogical and the performative. My reading of Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation" advances that the latter pair of concepts relates analogically to the former so that metaphor corresponds to the pedagogical and metonymy to the performative. Bhabha situates these binaries within both the subject and the nation. Although Bhabha argues that the pedagogical and performative relate to each other in a supplementary fashion, he eventually dissolves the contradictions that reside in each term into the notion of cultural difference, and the opposition between metaphor and metonymy into the notion of "the image - as point of identification" (*Location* 51). Bhabha understands "the image" as a trope that functions metaphorically and metonymically to rearticulate a monolithic notion of identity in terms of a heterogeneous process of identifications. At the same time, however, I contend that the notion of "the image" postpones the question of metaphor and does not explain the ways in which the crises caused by metaphorical operations can be read in productive ways. Methodologically, this section first establishes how Bhabha employs a metaphysical discourse of metaphor to define the trope as a pedagogical instrument of national authority. In a second move we will review Bhabha's reading of the supplement by rerouting it through Wilson Harris's notion of the *caveat* and by examining the totalizing effects of Bhabha's metaphor of the "proxy."[46] Bhabha's cursory reading of Butler's theory of performativity also invites us to investigate the ways in which Bhabha's and Butler's notions of cultural difference differ from each other.

Informed by Benedict Anderson's theory of hegemonic nation-formation as a process of imagining national communities through the onset of print capitalism and the dominance of the novel, Bhabha, despite his own criticism of Anderson, appropriates the notion that nation-formation is primarily a narrative process.[47] In this process, metaphor functions as a hegemonic device that designates a unified national identity, and contains the heterogeneity of cultures in a national articulation of "*the many as one*" (142). Here, once again, metaphor functions as a trope of substitution. More interestingly, from the beginning of his essay, Bhabha prepares the ground for a literal reading of metaphor as translation,

but simultaneously introduces a theoretical contradiction that determines my critique of his essay. I quote at length:

> The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin [due to mass migration and colonial expansion in the course of the nineteenth century], and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology of the word suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging, across the 'middle passage', or the central European steppes, across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of the nation-people. (*Location* 139-140)

> If, in our travelling theory, we are alive to the *metaphoricity* of the peoples of imagined communities - migrant or metropolitan - then we shall find that the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a kind of 'doubleness' in writing; a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a centred causal logic. And such cultural movements disperse the homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society. (*Location* 141)

In the first part of the two quotes, Bhabha emphasises the Aristotelian theory of metaphor as transfer and thereby establishes the psychic dimension of his argument as the transference moves from the animate to the inanimate to the idea, namely the nation. Although the function of displacement in metaphor is crucial and tempting for the postcolonial theorist, it is not without hazards because, as Bhabha points out, it seems easy to relativize and generalize the historically distinct and particular experiences of cultural displacement. In other words, in the name of unity and homogeneity the metaphor of the nation as imagined community erases the various cultural, historical, and political differences that motivate and mark the traffic of migrants not only in their native countries but also in the countries people emigrate to. This includes the first- as well as the second- and third-generation of immigrants or citizens with a non-Western cultural and racial descent.

In the context of the first quote, Bhabha's use of metaphor helps to open up the contradictory space and time of the rhetoric of nation formation, to relate the movements of migration to the classical definition of metaphor as transfer. However, Bhabha situates his initial understanding of metaphor in metaphysical discourse. What he sees as an

etymological and liberalizing approach towards metaphor in fact recalls Du Marsais' definition of metaphor as "the borrowed home." Derrida argues that Du Marsais' figure "is a metaphor for metaphor: expropriation, being-away-from home, but still in a home, away from home but in someone's home, a place of self-recovery, self-recognition, self-mustering, self-resemblance: it is outside itself — it is itself" ("White" 55). A literal reading of metaphor as displacement not only throws the subject back onto itself and thereby erases the differential or self-destructive potential of metaphor. It also denotes a "reappropriation" and detour of metaphor to "the Hegelian Idea," metaphor's movement of "*idealization and appropriation*" (Derrida, "White" 55). For this reason, I believe, Bhabha's initial use of metaphor forms the ground of a hidden dialectical approach in the construction of cultural difference, his theoretical focus.

The second part of the passage cited above introduces the need for a Derridean reading of the "*metaphoricity* of the people." Bhabha argues that the "metaphoric movement *requires* a [. . .] 'doubleness' of writing" (*Location* 141, my emphasis) as if metaphor was not already endowed with a detour, a folding, or "doubleness." A consideration of the split or doubleness *within* metaphor, however, would not allow for the reading of metaphor as a means for exclusive representation. In other words, metaphor as a form of political representation presupposes that one first constructs an imagined cohesive identity through metaphor and then speaks for it by way of metaphor. In order for Bhabha to maintain his argument, it is necessary for him to preposit metaphor as a unifying and totalizing trope. In this way Bhabha construes metaphor predominantly as a trope of power and elides the trope's unpredictable and disruptive effects. As a trope of power, however, metaphor, in Bhabha's terminology, belongs to the authoritative rather than performative discourse of nation narration.

Bhabha attributes the hegemonic functions of metaphor (i.e., its totalizing properties to cover up intra-national cultural and social differences as well as political interests) to the "pedagogical knowledges and continuist national narratives" that are "the

reified forms of realism and stereotype" (*Location* 152).[48] Although Bhabha acknowledges Derrida's argument that metaphor entails the possibility of catachresis in the last chapter of *The Location of Culture*, in "DissemiNation" he reads metaphor in its other Derridean sense as "white mythology" that constitutes the knowledge systems of the West. In Bhabha's notion of the pedagogical, the people are the objects of a homogeneous national discourse and are contained in the nation's rhetoric of "given essentialist identities" (149). By defining the pedagogical as "the process of identity as historical sedimentation" (153), rather than as process of identification, Bhabha establishes a close correspondence between the pedagogical and his reading of metaphor as a figure of selection. More specifically, we need to remember that nations are generated retrospectively in a selective process that filters out what in a history of conquest, for instance, needs to be forgotten and what remembered. This process of authorizing appropriate historical memories as dominant reference points for national identification generally conceptualizes metaphor as a binary trope divided into tenor and vehicle in order to convey a homogeneous identity. Anderson, for instance, argues that in French history the remembrance of the massacres of the Barthélemy Night is a signifier for national identity. To remember this night in a national context, however, presupposes the forgetting of the actual events and the anti-Huguenot pogrom that led to the massacres. What is sedimented as national identity, then, is the vehicle of a metaphor which seems both prescribable and fully translatable while the content or its various interpretations must be forgotten. It is in this way that nations construct linear time and continuity.

The correspondence between the pedagogical, understood as the normative, state-governed discourses of the nation, and Bhabha's conceptualization of metaphor becomes even clearer when the pedagogical is contrasted to the performative. The latter, according to Bhabha, denotes the loss of a cohesive national identity "in the signifying process of cultural identification" (*Location* 153) because it is articulated in configurations of repetition and contiguity. In this sense, the performative, as Bhabha understands it,

operates in metonymical ways because it recombines a number of contesting cultural identifications instead of positing, as Bhabha's notion of metaphor suggests, a homogeneous identity. According to Bhabha, both metonymy and the performative function as an intervening force into the pedagogical or authoritative rhetoric of the dominant politics of the nation. Bhabha rightly argues that a performative practice of articulating identities generates a shift of the ways in which people address the nation from its margins. He calls this performative address of the nation "the agency of the people" (*Location* 148), a form of agency marked by the heterogeneous and contending histories of different cultures. Yet, while I agree that the performative, understood in Butler's sense of performativity, provides an interventive practice into dominant discourses of the nation, I also suggest that Bhabha's distinction between metaphor and metonymy, the pedagogical and the performative appears to be artificially constructed. From a Butlerian perspective, the performative cannot function outside the normative constraints of power, that is, outside of what Bhabha calls the pedagogy of the nation. Indeed, if Bhabha understands the pedagogical as "the process of identity as historical sedimentation" (153), Butler argues that this process is part and parcel of a performative practice of exposing the ways in which, for instance, heterosexuality becomes a naturalized sexual identity through the reiteration of normative discourses of sexuality over time. Heterosexuality emerges as an accumulation of discursively produced identity effects. Yet, this "historical sedimentation" of identity is the necessary condition for a performative rearticulation of sexual identifications. Similarly, the dominant effects and operations of metaphor enable that metaphor can be reiterated and resignified in ways that disrupt the authoritative discourses of the nation. To emphasize, a division between the pedagogical and the performative suggests a binary rather than a discursive understanding of power relations. In the context of Bhabha's essay, however, the division between the pedagogical and the performative is essential for the articulation of cultural difference as an intermediary space that redefines given power relations.

The supplement, the Caribbean "caveat," the proxy, and the image

In Bhabha's argument the pairs of metaphor and the pedagogical and of metonymy and the performative designate two diametrically opposed positions in the modern nation state. Bhabha, of course, is aware that these contradictory elements in the rhetoric of the nation cannot be resolved dialectically, but that both sets of terms need to be "negotiated rather than sublated" (*Location* 162). What can be negotiated, he argues, is the negative excess of the nation's dominant narratives or pedagogies. This space of difference and deference enables minority discourses to be articulated in terms of "cultural difference" (162). Cultural difference disrupts national hegemonies, but it neither directly participates in nationalist pedagogies nor does it entirely coincide with performative strategies of resistance. Instead, it operates as a "supplementary subversion" of the nation by addressing the question of national belonging from a marginalized position. To Bhabha, the migrants, refugees, and different ethnic groups within the nation present both, in Lacanian terms, the disavowed Other within an imagined national Self and, in Derridean terms, the disruptive supplement at the origin of nation narration. Read through Bhabha's postcolonial perspective, the supplement undermines the assumed originality, unity, and legitimacy of nationhood concepts based on exclusive boundaries and the perpetuation of apparently ancient codes of racial and national belonging. The diasporic movements that erode national boundaries but remain unacknowledged as a shaping force of the nation generate political and cultural friction or, as Bhabha terms it, cultural difference. Cultural difference seeks to "rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority and resists totalization." The forms of identification cultural difference effects are "always constituted in a process of substitution, displacement or projection" (162). According to Bhabha's definition, then, cultural difference operates through metaphor, understood in conventional terms as substitution, and metonymy, understood as displacement. In short, the rhetorical modes of national address, which are central to

Bhabha's understanding of cultural difference, are predicated on a conventional definition of metaphor and metonymy. Bhabha's concept of cultural difference undoubtly presents a crucial and interventive concept for articulating contesting narratives of the nation. To ensure, however, that cultural difference further contributes to a democratic understanding of nationhood and does not become a new master narrative of postcolonial identity formation, we need to examine the political implications of the ways in which Bhabha defines the term's two founding tropes as well as functions, namely the pedagogical and the performative.

Although Bhabha does not fully separate the pedagogical from the performative, he understands the former as dominant and juridical articulations of the nation and the latter as contesting and alternative enunciations of the nation from a diasporic perspective. Bhabha's notion of the performative cannot be understood in Austinian terms. It appears to be indebted more to Derrida's concept of the general iterability and citationality of language than to the ways in which Butler applies Derrida's terms to the discursive operations of power.[49] Bhabha argues that the Derridean supplement "holds together [. . .] the performative and the pedagogical" (*Location* 155) in a moment of belatedness and repetition. Moreover, "[I]n [the] supplementary space of doubling – not plurality – where the image is presence and proxy," disjunctive time "can be turned into the discourses of emergent cultural identities, within a non-pluralistic politics of difference" (154). Other than in Butler's understanding of performativity, Bhabha's notion of "the performative and the pedagogical" does not suggest that performative discourses of identity are determined by the very authoritative, or in Bhabha's terms pedagogical, discourses of identity which they want to challenge and with which they are also complicit. Instead, Bhabha links the two terms through a "supplementary [. . .] doubling" or process of iteration that produces cultural difference. This process of repeating words with a difference implies the possibility of transferring the original or historically received context of an utterance into culturally diverse contexts. Yet, processes of transference, which generate "disjunctive time"[50] and

cultural difference, are by definition metaphorical processes that disrupt rather than stabilize cultural norms. Contrary to Bhabha's argumentation, I want to emphasize that metaphorical operations cannot be restricted to authoritative discourses of cultural or national identity formation. Furthermore, I suggest that Bhabha's use of the supplement conceals political and historical differences among diverse groups of immigrants that need to be recognized as a crucial plateau for the articulation of social and political demands.

Bhabha, then, adopts the Derridean supplement as a critical device to argue against binary concepts of nationhood that divide the nation into outside and inside spaces, periphery and center. Quoting Derrida, he argues that the supplement

> Intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*. . . . If it represents and makes an image it is by the *anterior* default of a presence . . . the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance. . . . As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief. . . . Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself* . . . only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. (Derrida qtd. In Bhabha, 154)

In this quotation Bhabha emphasizes that Derrida substitutes the supplement for the originality of meaning and thereby makes it a "subaltern instance." From this perspective the supplement can be appropriated as a useful device that challenges essentialist models of cultural identity. It seems to me, however, that the passages Bhabha omits from Derrida's text are as significant as the ones he includes. First of all, he does not problematize that, in the context of Derrida's text, the metaphorical status of the supplement refers to the notion that all writing is metaphor, understood as an endless process of substitutions and detours. Second, Derrida writes that the supplement's "place is assigned in the structure [of language] by the mark of an emptiness" (*Of Grammatology* 145). This absence or lack of "proper" referentiality implies a perpetual postponement of meaning. It can only be filled through "sign and proxy," through further supplements. What is at issue in a postcolonial reading of the Derridean supplement is the way in which we configure the supplement's constitutive absence.

Bhabha, of course, underscores that instead of operating in a complementary way,

the supplement functions in a destabilizing fashion. Rather than adding up to a totality, the supplement is added to a presupposed totality (i.e., the nation understood as a homogeneous entity). It may turn out, though, that these algebraic terms do not necessarily "disturb [the hegemonic] calculation" (*Location* 155). On the one hand, the supplement is not a space free of power relations. Rather, the fundamental absence inscribed in the supplement presents itself as something that seems to stand outside the workings of power and therefore excludes itself from political contestation. On the other, similar to his notion of the postcolonial subject as fetish (i.e., as someone who insinuates herself as a disturbing factor of identification into a hegemonic Self), Bhabha's use of the supplement may equally reduce the culturally and politically different investments immigrants have in disturbing existing power relations. Put differently, in Bhabha's scenario immigrants do not seem to provide any of the terms needed for political negotiations of power or, rather, they seem to have little influence in the choices of which terms are considered dominant and which are not. These terms, I think, rarely contain the various languages of identification which, to echo Bhabha's own term, sedimented in the course of histories and pedagogies of resistance.

Bhabha articulates cultural difference as an interventive political agenda. At the same time, by articulating marginalized cultural groups in terms of a Derridean supplement, he also describes these groups as an unspecified abstraction of people, so that cultural difference risks being a theoretical umbrella term that totalizes various conceptualizations of difference. In response and contrast to Bhabha, Geeta Kapur aptly suggests to be cautious of notions of difference that propose a "ghost-driven" form of "agency" and "collapse[] into a series of metonymically disposed identities that are but fragments spinning their way to entropy." Instead, we need to look for "a greater holding power of the historical paradigm where differences are recognized to have real and material consequences" (201). What Bhabha calls "non-pluralistic politics of difference" (*Location* 154), one might want to add to Kapur, can regress into political indifference and exclusionary forms of difference

disguised as liberal tolerance or politically and economically condoned categorizations of ethnic belonging. While this may be a harsh and polemic argument, there is reason for it insofar as Bhabha moves too quickly from Derrida's supplement to cultural difference and from questions of identity to configurations of cultural uncertainty and incommensurability.

In significant ways, however, some of Bhabha's and Derrida's arguments coincide with those made in Caribbean discourses of writing. This concurrence, as I want to show, reveals the ways in which postcolonial discourses based on poststructuralist theory and those based on specific histories can have similar effects but depart from different cultural and political agendas. With regards to my argument that we need to define the operative modes of metaphor before we can speak about metaphor in a postcolonial context, it is important to find ways in which to conceptualize the absence that characterizes not only the Derridean supplement, as Bhabha uses it, but also metaphorical operations.[51] To discuss the notion of absence in a culturally particular context does not necessarily interrupt the endless production of metaphorical representations. Instead, it opens the possibility to think absence not as an ahistorical marker in the structure of language but as the unacknowledged sign of historical loss and cultural destruction. In a Caribbean context, as Wilson Harris argues, absence, not unlike the structural absence in the Derridean supplement as a sign of violence, can be read as the condition of writing. At the same time, absence designates an ethical *caveat* that facilitates "a greater holding power of the historical paradigm" (Kapur 201) by registering history's losses and gains. The *caveat* finds its literary expression in metaphors that enact the contradictions of history.

Similar to Derrida's conceptualization of the supplement, Wilson Harris's discourse on Caribbean literature departs from the idea that Caribbean writing cannot draw on culturally uncontaminated origins or identities. Further, like Derrida, Harris as I have discussed earlier on, considers absence and paradox as the liberating forces of a literature that constantly crosses the generically artificial borders between fiction, history, and historiography. Both writers emphasize the heterogeneity of knowledge production by

investing in genealogical rather than teleological historiography in which time can no longer function as a linear and sequential account of causes and effects. Derrida, however, seeks to elucidate the invisible texts of Western philosophy and, thus, uncannily credits this tradition with having already signed its own deconstructive will. In contrast, Harris is not interested in writing a counter-history of the Caribbean. He writes the "inner time" (*Explorations* 28) of Caribbean history generated by the various Caribbean "external conquest[s] and internal collapse[s]" (16). Instead of relinquishing all positions from which to articulate a cultural identity, Harris acknowledges the necessity for and presence of such an identity, which is, however, neither absolute nor relative but an articulation of historically irreconcilable contradictions.

In contrast to the abstract emptiness that marks the Derridean supplement and enables the infinite deconstruction of meaning, in a Caribbean context, absence refers to cultural and historical experiences of loss. While Caribbean critics and writers have conceived of absence as a cultural stigma and trauma, they also make it their point of departure for articulating Caribbean processes of identification. In Caribbean literary history absence refers to comments by colonial travelers such as James Anthony Froude and postcolonial intellectuals such as V.S. Naipaul, stating that the Caribbean has no people, no history, no language. From a Naipaulesque perspective, absence implies a nostalgia for lost origins. For such writers as Walcott and Dabydeen, who position themselves against Naipaul, the absence of a historical archive facilitates ways of writing identity that are reminiscent of the Derridean notion of writing through absence, différance, and supplementarity. Derrida's model of writing, however, cannot fully account for the ways in which Caribbean texts configure absence, because in these texts absence signifies the particular Caribbean history of colonial conquest, slavery, and migration. Moreover, in contrast to the deconstructivist critique of immediacy or presence as an illusion of philosophical truth and originality, Caribbean writers must articulate immediacy in ways that reflect the long absence of a Caribbean archive of historical and philosophical texts and

the importance of oral narratives of history, resistance, and community.

For example, some discourses on Caribbean subjectivity read immediacy as an inevitable effect of a history determined by racial categorizations into cultural superiority and inferiority, purity and impurity. In such colonial historiographies, Derek Walcott remarks, "[t]he depth of being rooted is related to the shallowness of racial despair" ("Twilight" 21). Where nothing can be rooted, then, "everything is immediate, and this immediacy," Walcott explains, "means over-breeding, illegitimacy, migration without remorse. [. . .] The migratory West Indian feels rootless on his own earth" ("Twilight" 21). Here, then, immediacy is not the vessel of truth, but the mark of cultural "contamination," of violent and conflicting histories, of movement, and of an ambivalent loss of inner and outer borders. Thus, to articulate absence in terms of the supplement risks homogenizing different histories and terminologies; it undermines the production of discursive structures of cultural resistance.

In the Caribbean, cultural and racial heterogeneity has not been a choice but, as is well known, the effect of Spanish conquest, Dutch, French, and British colonization, the almost complete extinction of the native Amerindian population, the import of African slaves and East Indian indentured workers, Irish and Chinese laborers. Due to colonially imposed values and social forms of organization based on race, cultural heterogeneity in the Caribbean post-independence period did not necessarily function as an agent of change but, as is the case with Guyana, as a trigger for racially determined civil war, oppression and discrimination. While identity is always fragmented, discontinuous and never completely knowable, Caribbean concepts of identity emphasize the historical, material, and psychological genealogy of subjective fragmentation. However, this emphasis does not foreground an infinite cultural uncertainty but takes the erosion, rather than erasure, of histories and landscapes as well as spatial and temporal displacements as points of departure to articulate forms of Caribbean subjectivity that, in Harris's words, "begin to displace a helpless and hopeless consolidation of powers" (*Explorations* 12).

Similar to Bhabha, Harris sees processes of nation as well as identity formation as narrative processes. While Bhabha considers the subaltern to be a supplementary and therefore disruptive agent who insinuates herself into the hegemonic discourses of nation formation, Harris does not fill the gaps, or, as he calls it, "peculiar 'holes'"" (*Explorations* 11) ensuing from colonial encounters, with the proxy of the subaltern. Contiguous with the properties of the Derridean supplement, yet inflected with the ambiguous memories of colonial conquest, the "holes" of history, according to Harris, introduce a psychological and temporal dimension into the discourse of Caribbean history and writing. What Harris finds there are the startling, tragic, and contradictory encounters and complicities between "the *subconscious psyche of conqueror and conquered alike*" (*Explorations* 11). In Harris, the point of historical entanglements inscribed in the histories of slavery, conquest, and survival, becomes a "structure of salvage" (12) suggesting not a retrieval of losses and gains within colonial history but resembling a form of historical translation which holds in suspense the different temporal dimensions in which historical losses and gains occur. Far from implying a systemic closure, the "structure of salvage" works archeologically and underscores what in the dialect-based poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite or in Harris's own fiction seems to be untranslatable. In their works metaphors frequently constitute what Harris calls the "ruined fabric" (14) of the imagination: they signify salvaged fragments not simply of Caribbean folklore but of a never fully translatable Caribbean psycho-biography of multiple layers and "erosions [. . .] of violence" (17). In an almost Aristotelian sense, then, metaphors make visible the "holes" of history. Yet, in a less conventional sense, the incompleteness and iterability of metaphor allows us to read the "historicity of force" (Butler, *Bodies* 227), the history of colonial discourses of power and violence.

Furthermore, Harris argues that Caribbean narratives of identity or the nation need to articulate "agents of time" that "begin to subsist upon the real reverses the human spirit has endured, the real chasm of pain it has entered, rather than the apparent consolidation, victories and battles it has won" (*Explorations* 13). An understanding of time as a

movement pointing backward and forward, as dissonance and simultaneity, facilitates a coeval representation of different temporalities. The construction of time is also a matter of clashing desires because in the "New World" time was measured according to the colonizer's fantasy and desire of "newness," a newness that held the promise for the re-naissance of the "Old World" and required a physical and cultural erosion of what did not fit into the calendric beat of European progress. To access these time shifts in fiction, Harris argues, "a certain *caveat* should inform the imagination: a *caveat* which unceasingly appoints *losses* within *gains*" (12). While Harris's caveat intersects in some ways with Bhabha's concepts of cultural difference and the proxy, it also differs from it in decisive ways.

As with the proxy, the term caveat derives from legal discourse and signifies a suspension of proceedings and thus of passing judgment. It simultaneously marks a warning and a proviso in legal processes. Bhabha's and Harris's concepts, then, symbolically situate postcolonial discourses of history and resistance in a political and legal framework which eventually demands that we take sides and make judgments. Moreover, for both critics it is not the judgment but the conditions of the proceedings that lead to a judgment that are crucial for a positioning of the postcolonial subject. These conditions, however, whether articulated as caveat or cultural difference, are always provisional, postponing judgment and attending to the process rather than to the finalization of cultural negotiations. While Bhabha's notion of cultural difference is based on the supplementary function of the proxy that fills the "empty" space of the postcolonial subject, Harris's caveat seeks to contemplate how that space can be configured, what memories can be advanced from it by asking if that vacancy can be filled at all. Although both Harris and Bhabha suggest concepts of difference, Harris's caveat carves out the space and time of the object, namely the "losses *within* gains" (my emphasis), in the discourse of European conquest and colonialism. In this way, Harris seems much closer to Varadharajan's observation that the space of the subaltern is "simultaneously empty and overdetermined"

(*Exotic* 138) than to Bhabha's notion of cultural difference. Like Varadharajan, Harris wants to hold in suspense the relationship between object and subject in identity formation processes. Instead of establishing yet another dialectic of Self and Other he seeks to dramatize the paradox of emptiness and overdetermination in the constitution of postcolonial subjectivity. As a warning and suspension, the caveat can be read as both an ethical appeal to and writing strategy for the Caribbean writer. Rather than focusing on a continuous process of erasure, the caveat employs the binary identity effects of colonial power to dramatize these effects through parallel temporalities and multiple repetitions, translations and replacements of characters and events.

The question of the supplement's effectiveness, however, is also raised by Bhabha's own terms of "the image" and the "proxy" which unwittingly undermine the interventive potential of his own argument. The metaphor of the proxy not only refers directly to Derrida's supplement, but it also implies that the agency attributed to minority subjects must always be derivative. This is not to say that there can be an "original" or *ex nihilo* agency. According to a literal understanding of the proxy, however, subaltern agency demands that it be authorized by another person or institution so that it may act or speak in place of an other. Bhabha does not specify who authorizes whom. He also remains vague about the subaltern object's possibility to negotiate on its own terms or to resist acting as a corrective of a presumably dominant discourse of the nation. Bhabha's reference to the proxy's function in parliamentary discourse as a supplementary question elucidates the way in which the proxy's derivative property can restrict subaltern agency. "Coming 'after' the original, or in 'addition to' it," Bhabha says, "gives the supplementary question the advantage of introducing a sense of 'secondariness' or belatedness into the structure of the original demand" (1994, 155). "Coming 'after' the original," however, a supplementary question insists on an original, regardless of how much doubt it casts on that original; moreover, in order to be articulated, it needs to accept the existence and validity of an original.

According to parliamentary protocol the supplementary question is not placed in the main agenda but in an appendix as a critique that suggests democratic pluralism. The supplementary question may then function as a token or guardian of democratic principles rather than justice and thereby participate, to use Bhabha's own term, in a national pedagogy of containment. A reading of the proxy as substitute would enhance this argument and show that the proxy functions in the same way as a conventionally perceived metaphor, that is, by way of substitution. Thus, the proxy, instead of being attributed to the performative discourse of the nation, as it should be in the logic of Bhabha's argument and terminology, must be seen in conjunction with the pedagogic or legislating discourse of the nation. With regard to subaltern agency, then, the notion of the proxy or the supplementary question might foreclose the subaltern's heterogeneous subject-positions which are not necessarily linked to a presumed original but are derivative in other ways. More importantly, as a legally endorsed function of national consense formation, the proxy precludes an understanding of subaltern agency that does not participate in those national discourses for and in which the proxy acts. Bhabha's reading of the proxy, then, seems to occlude difference rather than produce it.

Similarly, Bhabha's articulation of the image as a rhetorical supplement in the narrative processes of nation formation dissolves the differences between metaphor and metonymy. He overlooks that the image is not a rhetorical figure void of history. In "Interrogating Identity," he defines the image as an instance of identification and ambivalence emanating from the split locus of enunciation. In fact, Bhabha's notion of the image collapses metaphor and metonymy into one term (*Location* 51) so that the image functions as a synthesis of the thetic metaphor and the antithetic metonymy. Even if the image does not fully operate as a metaphysical sublation, it, as Genette observes, provides an umbrella term for all kinds of rhetorical tropes, regardless of the term's actual connotation of resemblance and analogy. Interestingly enough, it is in Bhabha's figure of the image that his theoretical tendency to define metaphor in binary terms turns upon itself.

As I have explained in the previous chapter, the movement of detour and repetition opens a temporal gap in metaphor thus destabilizing it from within its own structure. Yet, in "The World and the Home," Bhabha suggests a slightly different understanding of the image. "The image," he says, "– or metaphoric, 'fictional' activity of language – makes visible 'an interruption of time by a movement going on the hither side of time, in its interstices'" (150). In other words, the image actually comprises the rhetorical figure of metaphor based on resemblance and analogy and opens a temporal gap through repetition. Bhabha's discourse cannot exclude metaphor because metaphor itself cannot be confined to the binary definition he assigns to it. Instead, metaphor always returns to its narrative moments of exclusion in order to enter the text from the back stage. In this sense, metaphor acts performatively and disrupts rather than consolidates normative discourses of identity formation.

Performativity and Cultural Difference

Bhabha's contradictory use of metaphor can be best examined through his distinction between a nationalist pedagogy and the performative. For once, it seems necessary to point out that not all pedagogies are nationalist pedagogies and that my critique of Bhabha focuses on the binary relation he installs between the pedagogical and the performative. When discussing national pedagogies, we need to avoid collapsing a critical pedagogy of independence and a national pedagogy of containment into an unspecified nationalist pedagogy. While both pedagogic practices may indeed produce the same mechanisms of exclusion and hierarchization, their different agents and motivations have different political impacts and trajectories. For example, such pedagogies of independence as Spivak's notion of an "alert pedagogy" (*Other Worlds* 116) work from within and against the omissions and normative cultural value systems enshrined by national pedagogies of containment.

By locating the discourse of nation formation in the split between the performative

and the pedagogical, Bhabha risks unravelling his own text. For example, his discussion of Caribbean maroonage as an "extended metaphor" (*Location* 145) suggests that the anti-colonial strategies of maroonage and its legacy of resistance belong to the pedagogical rhetoric of the nation. Despite his argument that the African American nation emerges through maroonage, Bhabha remains cautious to acknowledge the productive effects of normative discourses of power: "[P]ositions of authority," he proposes, "*may* themselves be part of a process of ambivalent identification" (145, my emphasis). While Bhabha does not pursue this thought any further, Butler's theory of performativity takes the historically produced instability of authority as a point of departure. Indeed, she emphasizes that all positions of power or loci of interpellation are themselves subject to the normative effects of power so that agency emerges from within the constraints of power. Thus, what Bhabha calls the pedagogical Butler defines as the regulatory discourse of power necessary to implement performative configurations of agency. Rather than representing a binary set of power relations, normalizing and disruptive discourses of power condition each other and operate as a continuum. In the history of Caribbean maroonage, the participation of Jamaican maroons in capturing fugitive slaves is certainly also an example for the ways in which resistance and emancipatory discourses of power can be neutralilzed and reappropriated in the service of colonial oppression.

Bhabha assumes that the metaphor of maroonage stands in for a national pedagogy that claims the nation on grounds of a pre-given, imagined past. Legitimizing itself by reiterating and deferring its claims to authority to an imagined past, the present state of the nation effaces the prior presence of insurgent movements and resistance from the dominant narrative of the nation. Bhabha conceptualizes this act of effacement as an authoritative national pedagogy. He distinguishes between "the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (*Location* 145). This distinction seems problematic if we consider that the metaphor of Caribbean maroonage works in both ways: In the national imaginary of the US at large, the memory

of black resistance interrupts the fantasy of national unity, comfort, and security, and thus must be forgotten and regulated. In this sense, Caribbean maroonage falls prey to the pedagogical practices of the nation. From an African American perspective, however, Caribbean maroonage writes an ambivalent history of survival and establishes part of a cross-cultural historical archive of the black presence on the American continent. Linked to the memory of the Black Jacobins and Toussaint L'Ouverture, Caribbean maroonage also presents a competing form and genealogy of the American nation, disrupting and resignifying purportedly dominant and linear narratives of the US-American nation. My critique, then, attempts to show that in postcolonial discourse metaphor functions in more ways than merely as a hegemonic trope of subjection. By casting the pedagogical as a national pedagogy opposed to performative processes of nation formation, Bhabha divests pedagogy from its productive possibilities and reintroduces a rather fixed notion of the relation between subject and object in discourses of nation-formation.

By establishing a culture of resistance, Bhabha argues, the former fugitive slaves have caused a violent break in both the hegemony and symbolic language of colonial or plantocratic power, thereby bringing its oppressive system of unequal notions of freedom, property and humanity to crisis. The demand for representation, in terms of exercising political rights and constituting a locus of address in and writing of the narrative of the nation, both disrupts the rhetoric of colonial power and prompts the nation's "double-time" (*Location* 145) in which its people figure as object and subject simultaneously:

> [T]he people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past* ; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process. The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. (*Location* 145)

This passage posits "nationalist pedagogy" as a dual process in terms of both Benjamin's

"homogeneous, empty time" and Anderson's "biography of the nations" (204). In other words, the 'people' share in a serial time or tradition of historical events which they are simultaneously obliged to forget or to erase in order to remember them or narrate them as founding moments of their national identity. Yet this process of remembering/forgetting in nation narration always demands a certain self-presence or contemporaneity as there is no Originator (Anderson 205) of the nation. In this way the hegemonic narrative of the nation is discursively produced and reproduced through reiteration and thus constitutes the processes of ideological identification of the subject with an imagined nation.

In order to think the concept of a "nationalist pedagogy" apart from the notion of performativity, Bhabha needs to construct a totalizing concept of the "people" as "historical objects" and "subjects." What is excluded from this notion of the "people" is a consideration of the object as not being exclusively tied to the agenda of nationalism. If the "people" as historical objects constitute or legitimize a founding past in order to install the nation in the first place, then those objects (i.e., the people) leave a number of different and competing traces in the historical constitution of the nation. These traces are not only found in memories such as Sethe's in *Beloved* or in the anxieties of the female character in Brand's "Train to Montreal," but also in street names[52] and the multicultural geographies of Northern American cities. The presence of the subaltern subject at once constitutes and contradicts hegemonic conventions of nation narration. Indeed, different languages of subaltern agency, as I will discuss in chapters five and ten, neither contribute to a discursive construction of the nation nor reproduce the "signs of a coherent national culture." Instead, they often remain unreadable. Thus, as constitutive objects of the nation, the people can never be fully contained in the pedagogical practices of the nation and refract the narrative of the nation through differences of race, gender, class, and culture.

Further, in contrast to Bhabha's psychoanalytical and Derridean articulation of cultural difference, Butler's reading of cultural difference sets the ethical task of reconfiguring the norms and theoretical presuppositions through which one makes political

claims. While Bhabha's notion of cultural difference presupposes a "sum of knowledge" that will be rearticulated "from [. . .] the signifying perspective" of a rather undifferentiated "minority" (*Location* 162), Butler argues that the aim of cultural difference is "the articulation of universality through a difficult labour of translation" ("Careful" 130). The difficulty consists in claiming a set of universal human rights in spite of the transcultural implications of the term "universality" and against "existing conventions" that "govern[] the scope of universality [and] preclude precisely such a claim" (130). What Butler implies, I think, is that powerful terms such as "universality" and "equality" punctuate hegemonic discourses of national and cultural identity formation while being dismissed by many progressive and leftist intellectuals. This dismissal, however, leaves both the responsibility to define and the power to employ these terms as legitimizing political concepts to national and transnational institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. Therefore, she argues, the impossible claim to universality must be made in a way that fundamentally "misappropriat[es]" and translates the term to make it legible as a "cultural articulation" with multiple modalities that contests the "trans-cultural status" ("Careful" 129) of the term.

In Butler's terms cultural difference emerges in the process of "cultural translation" (130). This process is less governed by a metonymic play of desire, alienation, and ambivalence, as Bhabha has it, than by a commitment to redefine the central terms of political life and participation. According to Butler, cultural translations perform a metaphorical operation "in which the terms made to stand for one another are transformed in the process, and where [. . .] [an] unanticipated transformation establishes the universal as that which is yet to be achieved and which, in order to resist domestication, may never be fully [. . .] achievable" ("Careful" 130-31). It appears that Butler's understanding of cultural translations makes a case for metaphor in its most general sense as a transformative trope. Yet, to read cultural difference as a metaphorical process of cultural translation has the advantage of cleaning up historically over- and misused terms for politically

emancipatory ends. What is significant to my study of metaphor is that in every process of translating meaning, the terms that are translanted change in unpredicatable ways. More specifically, if metaphor translates or transfers meaning, it modifies the terms of its own operation in ways that destabilize metaphor's constitutive elements of vehicle and tenor. In contrast to Bhabha's use of metaphor as a trope of substitution, a performative understanding of metaphor questions the trope's traditionally binary construction because this understanding of metaphor is itself historically produced.

To Butler, the task of cultural difference consists in a pedagogical undertaking in which one learns how to read, misappropriate, and translate the political norms, claims, and legitimizing practices of hegemonic discourses of cultural and national identity. Like Harris's notion of the *caveat*, Butler's formulation of cultural difference implies a warning that the constitution of cross-cultural identities cannot afford to relinquish such ethical concepts as "universality" but needs to rearticulate them. Yet, what needs to be specified is how Butler's understanding of cultural difference and performativity overlaps with what is often considered to be the central trope of postcolonialism, namely catachresis. In fact, Butler's emphasis on cultural translation as a pedagogical endeavor that brings together political theory and practice corresponds to and interacts with Spivak's project of drafting a rhetoric of subaltern agency. If, as I suggest, metaphors engage in a performative practice of cultural translation, we have to examine the ways in which both Spivak's and Butler's theory of catachresis help refining our understanding of metaphor as a performative trope.

Chapter 4

Metaphor, Catachresis, and Postcolonial Translation: Gayatri Spivak

Like Bhabha's work, Spivak's has frequently been charged with displaying an excessive use of discourse analysis (Benita Parry), an overemphasis on the textual practices of colonial representation (Abdul JanMohamed), a lack of consideration for the material conditions in the so-called "Third World" (Ajiz Ahmad), and with privileging the West as an object of investigation (Bart Moore-Gilbert). While this critique is often justified in Bhabha's case, such criticism never fully comes to terms with the theoretical complexity of Spivak's discourse on subalternity. In fact, Spivak interweaves and modifies deconstructive, Marxist, and feminist theory in order to carve out a conceptual space in which subalternity can be theorized variously as the sign for radical alterity, as the silent interlocutor of the West, as a discursively constructed subject-effect, and as a material and historical category shaped by imperialism and colonialism. Each reading of subalternity, however, needs to acknowledge the complicity of the reader or interrogator with the privileged and hegemonic discourses of power from which she speaks. This demand for the reader's task of self-evaluation, for a rigid scrutiny of the terminology and concepts one applies to the reading and subsequent construction of subalternity makes Spivak's project a fundamentally ethical and democratic enterprise. In this sense, Spivak's and Butler's theories invest in a radical democratization of an increasingly global society by deconstructing authoritative practices of how historically imparted unequal power relations legitimate and reproduce themselves.

Like Butler, Spivak argues that cultural identities are always constructed discursively and thus do not originate in a single history. If Butler conceptualizes subjectivity as an effect of the normative and productive effects of power, Spivak equally regards subjectivity as an effect of variously interwoven discourses. Yet, the two theorists differ in the significance they attribute to the question of whether marginalized people can

speak or represent themselves. Butler emphasises that the ambivalence of interpellative acts compels a contested social position from which to speak and draw forms of agency that allow for provisional political alliances, a concept of agency Spivak would call strategic essentialism. In contrast, Spivak strongly emphasizes that subaltern speech is always encumbered in a vicious circle of colonial practices of representation. In her famous essay "Can the Subaltern speak?", Spivak argues that the figure of the subaltern emerges as an "Other" by being at once incorporated into and erased from Western discourses of identity formation. Always positioned and defined in relation to the colonizer, the subaltern figure is both radically different from and uncannily identical with the Western "Self." To state, however, that the subaltern can speak for herself, and thus can wrest herself away from imperial forms of representation, implies that the subaltern is fully knowable and transparent, once again ready to be appropriated as a cultural Other.

While Spivak polemically concludes that the subaltern cannot speak, she also ends her essay with an example of *sati* that suggests that the subaltern speaks through "displaced gesture[s] " and the ventriloquist's[53] language of "catachresis" and "delirious" voices ("CSS" 104). Moore-Gilbert interprets Spivak's reading of the subaltern condition as a brilliantly drawn "'itinerary of silencing' endured by the subaltern" which, however, pays "little attention to the process by which the subaltern's 'coming to voice' might be achieved" (106). Although Moore-Gilbert's critique is justified insofar as Spivak tends to provide scattered and cursory examples of subaltern speech or voicing, he overlooks that Spivak's notion of catachresis theorizes the possibilities of subaltern speech. In fact, Spivak repeatedly argues that catachresis recodes cultural values and colonially imposed identities. In her theoretical texts, Spivak's notion of catachresis comprises a concept rather than an exploration of the figurative uses of the trope in postcolonial texts. As a translator of postcolonial texts, however, Spivak employs catachresis as a trope that disrupts and exposes the asymmetrical and colonially inherited relations of power and identity. In order

to understand the ways in which Spivak links the trope of catachresis to practices of postcolonial translation, we need to delineate her reading of metaphor.

Spivak's Critique of Metaphor

Spivak's theory of concept-metaphors and catachresis brings together a deconstructivist reading practice and a postcolonial critique. Although Spivak does not develop her notion of postcolonial catachresis in *In Other Worlds*, she lays out some of the presuppositions necessary for its conceptualization. Along with Derrida, Spivak argues that metaphor cannot be eradicated as it constitutes the differential value and function of language. "Philosophically," nothing can "be absolutely de-metaphorized" (261). At the same time, "no priority [. . .] can be given to metaphor, since every metaphor is contaminated and constituted by its conceptual justifications" (115). What we can do, then, is to offer deconstructive readings of both concepts metaphors are supposed to convey and the economy and politics of metaphor's circulation or value-production. To Spivak the value of metaphor consists in its production of difference. Similar to Derrida's notion of metaphor, Spivak argues that writing produces a form of surplus value that she understands to be use value.

In a review of Spivak's essays on Marxism, Rey Chow points out that Spivak's attempt to situate the concept of Derridean *différance* in economics contests "the old binary opposition between 'economics' and 'culture'" ("Ethics" 3). Against the risk of being accused of "economic determinism," Spivak "reopen[s] the 'economic' question" (3) both to mobilize deconstructive reading practices for postcolonial purposes and to examine the conditions of cultural value production in a postcolonial context. Like writing, use value is a secondary effect and "poses the question about origins" (Chow, "Ethics" 4), for value not only represents labor but manifests itself as *différance*, the unacknowledged profit of labor exploitation that in turn generates surplus value. Spivak's notion of *différance* intersects with my notion of metaphor insofar as I argue that the effacement of metaphor—the erasure

and overdetermination of its founding physical figure—is inscribed with culturally specific histories. If we consider that metaphor possesses a value that is in form similar to that of money, we can adopt Chow's reading of Spivak and argue that metaphor obtains its value by "being *inside* circulation/exchange, but in order to own it," metaphor has to be taken "*outside* circulation" ("Ethics" 4). Metaphor, of course, can never function "outside" itself since we can only speak about metaphor in terms of metaphor. What I want to emphasize, however, is that metaphor's self-destructive tendencies, its de-tours, as well as the possibility to misappropriate metaphors interrupt the flow of received meaning. To be "*outside* circulation," then, designates an abuse or a rupture of metaphorical meaning that allows us to read metaphor as a trope of cultural crisis. In this way metaphor produces value through its movements of de-tour while transferring its meanings into other discourses and geographies so that metaphor at once constitutes and disrupts discursive boundaries. In short, like Spivak and Chow, I want to foreground metaphor's possibility to operate as a catachresis.

By addressing Derrida's argument that metaphor produces symbolic and cultural value, Spivak introduces economic and ethical concerns into postcolonial reading practices of metaphor. To read writing or, for that matter, metaphor as a form of value-production "means," as Chow insists, "not accepting the privileging of one term over the other in [. . .] binary opposition[s]. [. . .] [V]alue is therefore [. . .] a function, a catachresis that results from a series of constructions" ("Ethics" 4). Spivak, then, argues that the symbolic power of concept-metaphors resides in their ability to transfer such Western concepts as democracy, Enlightenment, or nationhood into postcolonial spaces. This transfer, however, foregrounds an asymmetrical relationship of power between the origin of these concepts and their new contexts. In fact, the transfer turns metaphor into catachresis. For example, if in a Western context democracy functions as an idealizing metaphor for equal rights and a parliamentarian system of justice that guards against the abuses of power, in a postcolonial context democracy is often a metaphor for the legacies of colonialism and the

imposition of Western forms of government and control. It is in the gap that opens up in the process of transference, the gap between metaphor and catachresis, that subaltern agency can be produced. For while the Western concept of democracy has no native referent in postcolonial countries, it also comes to signify the political upheavals and contradictions in these countries. Many of Mahasweta Devi's short stories, for example, illustrate that the degeneration of democracy, understood as a colonially imported form of government, into bureaucratic corruption and the centralization of power on the level of official government is countered by local and communal forms of self-government. Transplanted into a postcolonial context, Western concept-metaphors turn into catchreses that foreground the political and cultural crises imparted by these metaphors in the first place. The theoretical boundary between metaphor and catachresis, then, appears to be a matter of place and perspective. Both tropes need to be understood as the two sides of the same coin. They constitute what Spivak calls the "deconstructive predicament of the postcolonial" (*Outside In* 64). In other words, the catachrestic excess produced through metaphor signifies the discursively and colonially produced and always ambivalent position of the subaltern who is socially and politically interpellated by precisely those concept-metaphors he or she must criticize. To claim metaphor as an instant of catachresis, then, we must proceed from those historical and symbolic "space[s] that one cannot not want to inhabit and yet must criticize" (*Outside In* 64). Thus, since we can neither live outside nor do away with metaphor, we need to find a form of critique that resignifies the normative effects of metaphor.

A reading of metaphor as a form of value-production demands, in Spivak's words, "scrupulous and plausible misreadings" (*Other Worlds* 116). Spivak's "misreadings" foreground the catachrestic properties of metaphor and situate metaphor within an "alert pedagogy" (116). Like Bhabha, Spivak assigns metaphor a pedagogical function. To her, however, the effects of metaphor within an "alert pedagogy" are diametrically opposed to the unifying and totalizing effects Bhabha allocates to the function of metaphor within a

"nationalist pedagogy." In the context of an "alert pedagogy," metaphor provokes misreadings and engages in processes of unnaming that are central concerns in the work of such Canadian writers as Robert Kroetsch and such Caribbean writers as Derek Walcott. Misreadings question metaphor's conceptual objectives by deconstructing the relation between tenor and vehicle and by presupposing that metaphor participates in several epistemological discourses at once. According to Spivak, misreadings of metaphor enable a certain agency inspite of the common notion that the use of metaphors generate totalizing rather than disruptive effects in postcolonial texts. An ample indicator for metaphor's totalizing tendencies might be Spivak's own use of female metaphors (i.e., the symbolic function of the clitoris and clitoridectomy) which tend to become master signifiers for the condition of the female subaltern.[54]

Nevertheless, Spivak articulates some of the ambivalences of metaphor in her critique of Mahasweta Devi's reading of the function of metaphor in her short story "Breast-Giver." "Breast-Giver," translated from Bengali into English by Spivak, tells the story of a Hindu woman, Jashoda, who makes motherhood her profession by commodifying her mothermilk and suckling the children of the high-cast Haldar household. As a corollary of her continuous breast-feeding, her own apotheosis of motherhood, and rejection of modern medical technologies, she finally dies of breast cancer. Spivak, in turn, examines the ways in which texts such as Devi's provide the occasion for a postcolonial pedagogy if they are read through a deconstructive, feminist, and Marxist perspective. Read from a Marxist and feminist point of view, Jashoda becomes the female victim of the sexual and material exploitation inflicted on her by India's cast system in general and of the incessant demand to nurture the children and male heirs of the Haldar family in particular. At the same time, a deconstructive reading practice dismantles the political allegory of Mother India, symbolized in Jashoda's absolute devotion to her own and the Haldar children, as a dominant myth of Indian nation narration. Taken together, all three reading practices allow Spivak to criticize Devi's representation of India's national narrative as a

parable of "India after decolonisation," of its modes of self-representation as "goddess-mother" (*Other Worlds* 244), and of its concomitant expectations under which Jashoda/India must collapse. Spivak argues that an allegorical representation that configures the "subaltern as metaphor" contains the danger of not representing the subaltern at all. "By the rules of a parable," she specifies, "the logic of the connection between the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphor must be made absolutely explicit." Thus, "the 'effect of the real' of the vehicle must necessarily be underplayed. The subaltern must be seen only as the vehicle of a greater meaning [. . .] what must be excluded from the story is precisely the attempt to represent the subaltern as such" (244). Put differently, the closer the relation between vehicle and tenor the more intensive metaphor's deceptive and identifying effects. Metaphor's catachrestical value is effectively subdued through the vehicle's unquestionable truth-effect. Thus, in a parable or allegory metaphor is used to make the subaltern transparent and homogenize the heterogeneous subject-positions the female subaltern inhabits. In this sense, Jashoda functions as a concept-metaphor of Indian nation narration and absolute victimization regardless of both the possibility of subaltern agency and the particularities that define different subaltern positions.

Catachresis and Disidentification

Spivak proposes that concept-metaphors and catachresis operate together as well as against each other. Catachresis refers to such concept-metaphors as democracy that postcolonial subject formation processes have to wrestle with the most because "no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space." They "also make postcoloniality a deconstructive case" (*Outside In* 60) because catachresis, in Derrida's and Spivak's understanding, entails the break-down and recontextualisation of received metaphorical meanings. As I have argued earlier, the destabilizing effects of catachresis result from the effacement, iterability, and de-tours of metaphor and, in Spivak's words, enable "the recoding of value as the differential possibility of exchange and the channeling

of surplus [i.e., the excess of meaning produced through *differance*]" (65). More specifically, the transference of Western concept-metaphors into a postcolonial context produces a number of culturally inflected meanings that are excluded from the dominant meanings of a concept-metaphor. These excluded meanings, the *différance* produced through the hegemonic operations of metaphor, can be reappropriated and resignified as a catachresis that disrupts the chain of metaphor's dominant referentiality. In this sense, Spivak's notion of catachresis coincides with the ways in which I define performative metaphors.

Although Spivak's concept of catachresis provides a trajectory for subaltern agency or speech, Spivak does not extensively discuss the effects and operative modes of catachresis within postcolonial literary texts. Despite her assurance to make use of catachresis in the more narrow sense and not in the wider sense in which "all language is catachrestic" (*Outside In* 298), she primarily applies a catachrestic reading practice to deconstruct such colonially imported concept-metaphors as the nation, democracy, and sovereignty (64). In fact, these concept-metaphors depict founding postcolonial catachreses insofar as they have been written in the context of Western Enlightenment and transferred into Europe's former colonies to name and exercise imperial control and government. For example, under the pretense of granting India a large degree of self-rule, British colonial policies installed India's colonial government by exploiting and ultimately polarizing the rigid social hierarchies of the Indian cast system. These policies not only shaped the British *Raj* government but also India's post-independent forms of government. In the context of India's history of colonization, democracy and nationhood function as catachreses because they are colonial imports and designate an abuse of the very principles of individual freedom and sovereignty they originally refer to. Spivak's notion of catachresis, then, functions as a theoretical concept that facilitates the deconstruction of dominant discourses of nation formation and colonialism. However, to understand catachresis primarily as a theoretical concept also risks conflating different political agendas with the rhetorical

particularities of postcolonial texts. Spivak's notion of catachresis can be applied in useful ways to my understanding of metaphor as a performative trope insofar as catachreses and performative metaphors both operate through modes of repetition and disidentification and facilitate postcolonial practices of translation.

Spivak considers catachresis to be a figure of differential meaning coded through translation and the disruptive properties of rhetoric. To apply Spivak's notion of catachresis to a performative understanding of metaphor requires us to accept her observation that "[t]he experience of contained alterity in an unknown language spoken in a different cultural milieu is uncanny" (*Outside In* 181). Spivak's Freudian description of postcolonial translations as a practice of alterity that produces difference through uncanny repetitions of the same implies that this practice works, in Butler's terminology, through a form of "*dis*identification" (*Bodies* 219). More specifically, let us recall that, according to Butler, power works through mechanisms of exclusion which generate an inherent instability of power. For example, the act of naming is governed by an "incapacity ever fully to describe what it names" (*Bodies* 218). Being unable to achieve an identity between itself and what it designates, a name facilitates a practice of misquotation or what Butler describes as the "reciting of the signifier [that] must commit a disloyalty -- a catachresis -- in order to secure [. . .] the iterable or temporal conditions of its own possibility" (220). At first sight Spivak's and Butler's notions of catachresis seem indistinguishable from each other. A closer look, however, suggests that Butler speaks of citing and enacting the contradiction and differential inscription that make metaphor a catachresis. By articulating catachresis as a performative act, Butler theoretically violates the relation between vehicle and tenor. In this way, metaphor becomes readable as a "political signifier" (Butler, *Bodies* 219) that dislodges received chains of signification.

Similarly, Spivak reads catachresis as the value-carrying *différance* of metaphor legible in the gaps and silences of a text. In fact, she maintains that reading the "uncanny" experience of a postcolonial rhetoric remains bound to the deconstructive operations of

metaphorical excess so that "[r]hetoric must work in the silence between and around words" (*Outside In* 181). The notion of silence occupies a central position because as the mark of the subaltern in Spivak's texts, silence signifies a "contained" and to a certain extent untranslatable "alterity." Within ethnic Canadian and Caribbean literary texts this silence is most dramatically announced through the use of the *creole continuuum* or of macaroni structures, namely the practice of leaving some words untranslated in the otherwise English fabric of the text.

The status of these structures, however, is highly controversial. For example, Arun Mukherjee argues that "untranslated words create a barrier between the reader and the text" (167). They have a pedagogical function in that they "demand that we recognize the reality of a multilingual, multicultural earth" (167) and add "to the text's emphasis on rendering the autonomy and uniqueness of a culture" (166) while "refus[ing] transparent access" (170) to cultural Otherness. In contrast to the essentializing and even exoticizing tendencies of Mukherjee's reading of macaronis, Joseph Pivato implicitly proposes that macaronis are an expression of the ethnic writer's "search for the authentic expression of [. . .] experience" which always implies a "process of translation." He points out that such processes not only deterritorialize the English language but also "change[] the minority language in terms of context, meaning, and even sound" (154). Referring to something that is in translation but not altogether translatable, macaroni structures also mark normative and productive sites of foreclosed memory. For example, in Hiromi Goto's novel *Chorus of Mushrooms* Japanese phrases and terms for food indicate the stigma the protagonist's parents attach to Japanese culture after their arrival in Canada. At the same time, the Japanese macaronis impart the irrepressibility of Japanese culture and language through the protagonist's search for identity and her non-verbal communication with her grandmother. Spivak rightly contends that configurations of silence shape postcolonial texts, but she hardly specifies the various functions and effects silences generate in different ethnic texts. Moreover, she does not explain whether silences or gaps principally function as

interventive sites of meaning production or can become loci of constraint.

My use of Spivak's conceptualization of catachresis is perhaps best illustrated by reviewing her reading of Morrison's *Beloved*. In particular, Spivak discusses the scene of Sethe's encounter with her mother. This scene dramatizes how Sethe's mother, who is about to be lynched, refuses to pass on her physical mark of slavery to her daughter. This scene, Spivak argues, translates the "mother-tongue from mother to daughter" (*Outside In* 195). The loss of Sethe's mother-tongue, a language whose words Sethe cannot remember but whose violent messages of abuse and uprooting remain with her, represents "a certain birth-in-death, a death-in-birth of a story that is not to translate or pass on. [. . .] And yet it is passed on, with the mark of *un*translatability" (195). Although Spivak is right to maintain that Morrison employs the differential value encoded in the losses and gains of metaphorical translation processes, it is also reductive to argue that this "*un*translatability" resides in the mother-daughter relationship as an "unbroken chain of rememory in (enslaved) daughters as agents of history not to be passed on" (196). Up to a point, Spivak's argument applies to Sethe's relationship with her mother and her daughter Beloved, but it does not apply to Sethe's other daughter, Denver, who escapes her mother's house to break the chains of an enslaved memory. Indeed, from a performative perspective Sethe needs to pass through the traumatic memories of "the unspeakable," symbolized in her own and her mother's scars of slavery, in order to articulate the normative effects of what is presumably untranslatable. The story, then, must be passed on not as a closure of history and memory but as a story of communal agency and caution against the psychic and social regulations generated by a historically and politically sanctioned forgetting.

In her own translational works, however, Spivak employs catachresis as an inherently unstable figure which enables both a transmission of meaning between different sign-systems and changes within sign systems. While postcolonial translations[55] configure catachresis in various ways, they have, as Spivak puts it succinctly, to "operate *with* the

resources of a history shaped by colonization *against* the legacy of colonization"

("Translator's Note" xxxi). In one way or another, the instability of catachresis results

from its constant pull against the legacies of a colonized language and imagination. More

importantly, the instability of catachresis marks a moment of crisis within translation,

because it tends to emerge as a singular instance of untranslatability. This potential for

crisis within translations brings about a "functional" yet violent "change in sign-systems."

As Spivak remarks, "the change itself [in sign-systems] can only operate by the force of

crisis [. . .]. Yet, if the space for a change [. . .] had not been there in the prior function of

the sign-system, the crisis could not have happened" (*Other Worlds* 197). Thus, by force

of its inherent crisis, catachresis can break into and displace established sign-chains.

The disruption of received referentiality through catachresis is not a sequential but a

coeval process. Like the significance Walter Benjamin allocates to literalization in

transforming the target and source languages of translations, the catachrestic functions of

postcolonial translations generate a change within the "original" language so that no clear

distinction between an original and a derivative (i.e., translated) text is possible. Second,

postcolonial translations are not merely concerned with the deconstruction of an original or

dominant text, but also with the changes and differences within the translated text. As Rey

Chow points out:

> Critiquing the great disparity between Europe and the rest of the world
> means not simply a deconstruction of Europe as origin or simply a
> restitution of the origin that is Europe's others but a thorough dismantling of
> *both* the notion of origin and the notion of alterity as we know them today.
> This dismantling would be possible only if we acknowledge [. . .] the
> *coevalness* of cultures and consider the intersemiotic transformations that
> have happened as much to non-Western societies as to Western ones.
> (*Primitive* 194)

An apt example for the "*coevalness* of cultures" and translations is Spivak's translation of

Mahasweta Devi's short story "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha." Since I do not speak

Bengali, I cannot comment on Spivak's translation. Instead, I would like to discuss the

effect of the English macaronis in Devi's text. In Spivak's translation these words are

italicized to signal their original status as English words in a text otherwise written in Bengali. My fascination with Devi's writing strategy is twofold. First, Devi reverses common strategies of postcolonial writing by postcolonizing English rather than her mother-tongue. Second, as displaced macaronis the English words illustrate a loss or abuse of received meaning through the transfer of formerly powerful metaphors of colonial government into a subaltern context. They illustrate the turn from concept-metaphor to catachresis.

Generally speaking, macaroni fragments in postcolonial and ethnic texts are usually words derived from the native language of the writer and indicate both ethnic difference and/or a specific relation between the English language, the text it is used for, and the writer. Those structures often correspond to an understanding of multiculturalism in terms of cultural diversity since a variety of texts, such as M.G. Vassanji's or Rohinton Mistry's, leave words denoting specific customs, dress, or food, untranslated. The multifarious effects of macaronis range from a defamiliarization of the reader to the invocation of an exoticized cultural Other. In Spivak's translation of Devi's text, however, most italicized macaroni fragments are English words connoting colonial or post-Independence administrative and political forms of organization. They frequently signal the colonially imported concept-metaphor of the Western nation and symbolize an originary act of colonial violence in the fabric of Indian nation narration. Yet, to italicize words which Western readers might associate with given concepts demonstrates that within a subaltern context those concepts do not count as given or normative. Indeed, they mark a catachresis in Spivak's sense, that is, a concept for which "no adequate referent can be advanced from postcolonial space" and thus revoke the Western claim to power. Indeed, while the faint and distorted presence of English terms in Devi's texts signals India's colonial past, it also foregrounds that Western concepts of rule are not necessarily adapted to but perverted in culturally different contexts. In particular, citing post-independent India's homogenizing strategies of nation-building which exclude the subaltern from the agenda of the nation,

these words mark a historical and cultural distance between the dominant forces of the Indian nation and the tribal subaltern. In the context of Devi's story, macaronis function as catachreses that bring to the fore culturally coeval processes of transformation so that English colonialism, post-independent India, and the position of the tribal subaltern cannot be read separately. The operative modes of those catachrestic or elliptical translations, I think, are performative because in Devi's short story italicized words such as "*relief*," "*Road Transport*" (131), "*Migrant Labor Act*" (127), "*map* " (137), or "*District Magistrate*" (106) cite and disidentify their original reference. For example, a former map of colonial exploration now marks a subaltern geography of absence and dispossession. Devi's English macaronis both deform the naturalized and familiar status of the English language and demarcate its limits as a meaningful language in a subaltern context.

To return to my earlier critique of Spivak's tendency to conceptualize catachresis as a theoretical concept rather than a rhetorical figure of postcolonial writing, I would like to propose that conflating the figure, the historically and psychologically informed absences within metaphor, and concept of a trope risks ignoring the productive capacities inherent in each term. As Varadharajan argues through Adorno's negative dialectics, it might be useful to keep the conceptual and the aesthetic apart to let them "'keep faith with their own substance through their opposites. To collapse the distinction between language and "truth" (the aesthetic and the conceptual) is to forgo the value of each'" (Adorno qtd. in Varadharajan 78). Although separating the conceptual from the figurative uses of metaphor raises the suspicion of reintroducing a division between the aesthetic and the political, the opposite is the case. A separation of "truth and trope," Varadharajan argues, "consider[s] the possibility of [an] active negotiation" (78) between both. A separate consideration of metaphor as a concept of identity formation and as a figurative trope allows us to read metaphor's multiple de-tours and specific cultural and historical inscriptions in postcolonial texts. For example, like Varadharajan, Harris contends that metaphor has an arbitrating rather than a synthesizing function in postcolonial texts. Moreover, a separation of this kind

also enables a clearer examination of how a signifier changes the concept it is supposed to convey or, closer to Adorno, how an object leaves specific traces and residues of resistance before being sublated into a concept. A separate reading of the absences in metaphor, its possibility to function as a catachresis, enables a reading of the power-invested relations between both the presumed vehicle and tenor and thus erodes metaphor's binary structure.

To hold in suspense the process of transference between vehicle and concept compels a reading practice that must grapple with the actual void and time-lag that constitutes catachresis. Further, it also extrapolates the "resistance of the object to the subject's identifications" (Varadharajan xii) and foregrounds the object's historically and psychologically particular position in the processes of postcolonial identity formation. Varadharajan points out that "the pervasiveness of Adorno's work" consists in "its remarkable capacity to evoke the fragility of a new self committed to 'imaging what [it] can by definition not yet imagine or foresee' (Jameson)" (65-66). This commitment to imagining a yet undefined future opens the possibility of agency and cultural difference in the way in which Butler defines these terms. And if metaphor, as I have argued, provides a means to access and to produce memory retrospectively, such a commitment also facilitates imagining the future in terms different from those prescribed by the past.

Varadharajan further comprehends negative dialectics as "a logic of disintegration because it is committed to tracing the historical trajectory of the object" (72) and must perform Adorno's suggested "impossible possibility" of elucidating "the possible reconciliation between concept and object" (59) with those means which make such a reconciliation impossible. The performative reiteration of a catachrestic referent or metaphor, then, must enact a form of negative dialectics by keeping in view and taking seriously the moment of suffering of the object and the limits of dominant knowledge production. By playing out and holding in suspense the contradictions inherent in the traces of the object's resistance, it becomes possible to advocate a notion of identity that contains a physically and historically inscribed material kernel. Yet, this kernel cannot be read as an

essentializing and totalizing signifier of identity.

We can say, then, that a "performative metaphor" facilitates agency as well as it produces memory through reiteration and thus forms a narrative strategy of intervention. Similar to Spivak's notion of catachresis, a performative metaphor cannot be thought outside the normative discourses of power to which metaphor gives rise and by which it is shaped. In this sense, performative metaphors participate in and produce both authoritative and alternative discourses of nation narration. The reiterative movement of a performative metaphor not only dissolves the binary distinction between vehicle and tenor, but makes unequivocal referents obsolete. More precisely, the movement of reiteration often demands a "*dis*identification" or a catachrestical referent in order to push the regulatory modes of metaphor into crisis. The disruptive effects of a performative metaphor reside in metaphor's de-tours and tendency toward catachresis which enables a misappropriation and resignification of dominant meanings attached to metaphor. A performative metaphor misquotes and enacts the normative effects of metaphor. Furthermore, to conceptualize metaphor in performative terms proposes that metaphor does not operate through the dialectics of vehicle and tenor but through repetition and citationality. Instead of dissolving the crisis within metaphor, a performative understanding of metaphor underscores the trope's interventive potential by dramatizing its moments of crisis. The performative effect of metaphor, though, goes hand in hand with the reading practices applied to metaphor as the reader must hold in suspense rather than resolve those contradictions that produce the performativity of a text.

Part II

Performing the Body

> Once in the New World,
> The Immigrant can
>
> develop images of places that become cankers of irritation.
>
> Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill*. (27)

A 1950s Chinese restaurant in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, the Diamond Grill provides the setting for Fred Wah's fragmented narrative *Diamond Grill*, a genealogy of his culturally mixed family. Wah's text, in some respects, translates physical memories of sense, taste, and vision into a "journal journey" (1) which emphasizes the pleasures and conflicts of cultural contamination while demystifying the "cankers of irritation" lodged in the images and desires of cultural authenticity. "Synapse and syntax" (12), the body and language as intersecting sites of cultural meaning production, become mutual informants; they orchestrate a figuratively dense text punctuated by the interplay of metaphor and metonymy. Being often indistinguishable from one another, both figurative devices reflect and produce the constant intermingling of cultures, histories, bodies, and memories. The restaurant's wooden swing door, for instance, metonymically designates other doors, such as the "doors used for interrogation and the collection of head taxes" in Victoria's "Detention Hospital" (22). Metaphorically, this door "swings between the Occident and the Orient." Its swinging movement defies locks, and announces a "silence that is a hyphen and the hyphen is the door" (16). The door, thus, signifies the complex discourse of dual yet fluid hyphenated Canadian identities. Instead of effecting a closed system of tropes, the intersections between metaphor and metonymy produce a figuratively and culturally open text.

By dissolving the boundaries between metaphor and metonymy, Wah's text invites us to read and deconstruct ethnicity through generically mixed forms of writing. Or, we

may even argue the reversed case: Wah may ask his readers to adapt an ethnically hybrid perspective to deconstruct his text. Wah calls his writing a "biotext, [. . .] an innately cumulative performance" of fictional autobiographies. As a textual archeology *Diamond Grill* stages "poses and postures, necessitated [. . .] by faking it" rather than "true stories" (*Diamond Grill*, Acknowledgments). Wah's emphasis on "faking" mannerisms and attitudes suggests that individuals do not have an innate and authentic identity. Instead, they must enact and occupy various subject positions in order to negotiate identity. The performative quality of Wah's text emerges from the physical capacity to store and produce memory as well as from tactile perceptions through skin tissue, the nervous system, and the body language of gestures. In order to employ the body as a textual medium through which to produce his "biotext," Wah reconfigures the gap between signifier and signified, the physical and semantic excess that marks and traverses the limits of the spoken word. *Diamond Grill* dramatizes such reconfigurations through its fragmented quality and structure, its generically different textual elements such as dictionary entries, quotations from postcolonial studies, poems, advertising notes, brochures, and shop signs. As the term "biotext" implies, the generic multiplicity of Wah's novel engages in multiple textual combinations and charts various life-stories without synthesizing them into a single whole. The need to "fake" or perform identities through the play of language and writing also bears a number of productive ambiguities pertinent to my discussion of performativity and cultural contamination in Lee's and Dabydeen's texts.

Wah's metaphor of the swing door reminds the reader not to see metaphor and metonomy as mutually exclusive tropes in a culturally hybrid text. More precisely, the swing door functions metonymically as a repetition of different kinds of doors while metaphorically connoting the hyphenated space of cultural and national hybridity. Operating through substitution, the metaphor leaves the dual relation between tenor and vehicle intact, yet emphasizes the trope's potential to make multiple semantic links. Although the example of the swing door clearly challenges the structuralist binarism of metaphor and metonymy,

it does not do so in performative ways. In contrast to performance, performativity becomes effective when located in a normative power discourse. Wah's swing door may suggest that culturally hybrid identities are subjected to regulatory discourses of cultural homogeneity, but the metaphor itself does not produce normative power. In other words, the regulatory functions of the swing door metaphor, namely its constitutive role in a specific power discourse, remain unrecognized so that the metaphor eventually posits a culturally hybrid identity as authoritative.

The figurative boundary crossings of Wah's text, however, provide a point of departure for reading metaphor in Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (1990) and David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991), both of them first novels. From different cultural perspectives, the two novels negotiate identity formation processes through contesting and contested notions of cultural difference. In generically hybrid texts such as Wah's and Lee's, the concept of cultural difference does not necessarily coincide with idealist articulations of what is often theorized as the "politics of difference." For example, in his influential essay on Canadian multiculturalism or, more particular, on Quebec's status within a hegemonic anglophone Canada, "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor suggests that historically "[t]he politics of difference is full of denunciations of discrimination and refusals of second-class citizenship" (39). While Taylor acknowledges that dominant identity politics are ambiguously based on the humanist principles of universal equality and dignity, he also employs the discriminatory term "second-class citizenship" as an apparently valid descriptive category. Moreover, Taylor criticizes that the politics of difference give rise to an essentializing and "differential treatment" (39) of culturally and socially marginalized groups, a condition to be amended by cultural erudition and the "'fusion of'," cultural "'horizons'" to "understand[] [. . .] what constitutes worth" (67) or different cultural value systems. Clearly governed by a binary division between "our" and "their" culture, Taylor's notion of cultural difference suggests that cultures encounter each other as homogeneous and holistic entities whose democratic organization

depends on a dialectic of value recognition. Taylor not only reinstates what he criticizes, namely the pitfalls of humanist idealism, but also forecloses any model of radical democracy in which the notion of identity would be principally non-foundationalist.

Wah's, Lee's, and Dabydeen's texts, however, suggest that cultural difference is at once productive and insolubly contradictory as it cannot escape processes of cultural contamination. This is not to say that the notion of cultural difference dispenses with universal ideals such as equality and dignity, but that it is necessary to establish the social and political premises on which such ideals are conceived. In my discussion of Lee and Dabydeen, I understand cultural difference, along with Butler, as a metaphorical practice of translation in which the terms that substitute each other are transformed in the process of translation itself. In this kind of translation the universal emerges both as unexpected turns of meaning and as that which can ultimately not be fulfilled. The various ways in which Lee's and Dabydeen's novels employ cultural translation generate a rhetoric of cultural contamination that addresses nation narration and cultural difference from a performative perspective.

Similar to Wah's novel, Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and David Dabydeen's *The Intended* employ narrative strategies that rely on both textual archeology and the dramatization of the body. Both novels explore cultural difference through their characters' predicament of having to conform to homogeneous notions of identity and to live in a culturally hybrid environment. Lee's novel uses a number of different narrative strategies to envision a female Chinese-Canadian family genealogy. Dabydeen's novel recounts memories of colonialism, immigration, and racism through the voice of a nameless narrator whose perspective is split into a younger and an older self. This Part of my study, then, examines the ways in which the use of metaphor as a normative, in Bhabha's sense pedagogical, device can produce performative identity effects, thus facilitating various modes of agency. Do Lee's and Dabydeen's novels suggest forms of subjective agency that are not easily allocated to either the pedagogical or the performative?

And if the novels' characters possess agency at all, what are the languages of resistance in which this agency is articulated? If the performative is a *modus operandi* of resistance, how efficient is it?

Disappearing Moon Cafe and *The Intended* deal with visibility and invisibility, more specifically, with the role bodies play in the process of forming culturally inscribed identities. Through a self-consciously writing and narrating voice and through a number of narrative techniques such as a prologue and an epilogue, Lee's novel presents both a genealogical narrative of cultural contamination and a normative narrative of consanguinity and cultural essentialism. The two narrative strands inform and traverse each other through metaphors of the gaze and the glance which shape the relationships of the novel's female characters with both the Chinese and the dominant white Canadian community. For the purposes of my argument, I treat the gaze as a regulatory and the glance as a productive site of power. In tune with Frantz Fanon's rather than Jacques Lacan's analysis of the gaze, I understand the gaze as a culturally and racially interpellative force. The glance, in contrast, interrupts the totalizing perspective of the gaze through metaphorical and metonymic operations. Not unlike the Lacanian screen, the glance refers to an improvisational act of looking. It dissolves the presumably rigid boundaries between the seeing subject and the object seen to dramatize the contradictions of subject formation processes.[56] The gaze and the glance enact contesting identity formation processes. Lee's novel orchestrates identity discourses through metaphors of incest, of the family tree, and the "(trans)parent" (i.e., parenting outside of biological family relationships), suggesting a language of agency based on performativity and intercultural translations. The performative effects of these metaphors, however, depend on and overlap with the regulatory functions of the gaze.

More precisely, the homogenizing and racializing effects of the gaze work in a twofold way. On the one hand, the Chinese-Canadian community is politically and historically subjected by and to the gaze of the dominant white society. On the other, a number of women within the Chinese community employ the power of the gaze by

transferring their own experiences of violent displacement, racism, and cultural dispossession onto younger female family members so as to construct family hierarchies over which they can preside. Through the dynamics of power inscribed in the gaze, racism and sexism become legible through the history of Chinese-Canadian immigration, male and female social isolation, and the traffic of Chinese women as paper brides. Despite their different political interests, both the dominant white and marginalized Chinese communities exercise the gaze as a form of oppression in the name of culturally uncontaminated identities. This shared value of exclusionary identities, however, shows the boundaries between 'dominant' and 'marginal' to be porous. From a performative perspective it is the prohibition of cross-cultural identifications that establishes a functional outside and regulates the relationships and histories of each character in Lee's novel. At the same time, this prohibition produces incestual relations which destabilize and reiterate the discourse of cultural authenticity through a number of metaphors and catachrestic disidentifications. Female agency, then, emerges through incestuous family and community relations and thereby undermines the alleged authority of male lineage and cultural authenticity.

Similarly, David Dabydeen's *The Intended* portrays the experience of immigration and racism. In the Caribbean context of the novel, the violence of racism perpetuates the traumas of slavery so that race as a category of identification appears as "the effect of the history of racism" (Butler, *Bodies* 18). In Dabydeen's novel, metaphors of race reinforce and contest the racist discourses in which they circulate. As with Lee's novel, Dabydeen's employs a number of metaphors which arbitrate the ways in which the violent effects of the gaze produce reductive and racialized identities. Reflecting the ambiguous practices of cultural and racial representations, metaphors of unspeakable violence and invisibility dominate *The Intended*'s narrative. Metaphors such as the cocoon or the video camera negotiate identity as a hazardous enterprise torn between the desire for racial invisibility and cultural visibility to claim one's own historical presence in Britain's postcolonial society.

Chapter 5

David Dabydeen's *The Intended*: Metaphorical Configurations of Cultural and Racial Invisibility

David Dabydeen's first novel *The Intended* investigates the symbolic cultural legacy of colonialism by rewriting Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* from the perspectives of the mute black African and Kurtz' nameless intended. Dabydeen's novel casts the former in the character of Joseph Countryman, a black, urban Caribbean youth who leads a life of social ostracism in contemporary London. The novel dramatizes his struggle for resistance against perpetual physical and cultural confinement as a series of dramatic failures. Taking into consideration that Joseph shares his name initials with Joseph Conrad, the novel situates Joseph Countryman's personal failures in the larger historical context of Britain's failed imperial project of colonialism. Joseph's attempts at resistance and self-assertion are countered by the novel's nameless narrator who frequently perceives Joseph as his *alter ego*. A young Indo-Guyanese immigrant in London, the narrator longs for a stable cultural identity and social acceptance, but his desires remain frustrated. In contrast to Joseph, the narrator relies on a sound education and professional achievement as the liberating forces against racist discrimination. The novel's retrospective narrative of Joseph's and the narrator's shared adolescent years symbolically positions the older narrator as the intended of Joseph as well as of English culture and history. More precisely, to a certain extent the narrator dedicates his story to Joseph[57] whose ingenious but failed attempts at self-fulfillment and resistance he both admires and despises. Although the narrator feels culturally obligated to side with Joseph, he eventually separates himself from Joseph and his stigma of poverty and social and racist discrimination to court white English culture in the library halls of Oxford. The interrelated metaphors of Joseph's video camera and the cocoon dramatize the relationship between Joseph and the narrator and the contradictions between social constraints and agency. Both of these metaphors create various narrative

tensions and push the notion of resistance itself into crisis. By citing the normative effects of racial, cultural, and political (in)visibility, the metaphors of the video camera and the cocoon performatively engage with various strategies of resistance against racist representations of black people in England.

The video camera and cocoon metaphors gain their disturbing effects through the novel's divided narrative perspective. More clearly, the novel's story is told through an older, self-conscious narrator who retrospectively adopts the voice of his younger Self. The novel's chapters told from the perspective of the narrator's younger Self include the narrator's Guyanese childhood and his early years as an immigrant in London which he shares with Joseph. In contrast, the voice of the older and Oxford-educated narrator retrospectively interprets and filters these childhood years. While the relatively apolitical younger self struggles to escape the poverty-stricken conditions and racist violence of Enoch Powell's England by acquiring "a collection of good examination results" (113) and a university education, the older narrator reads this struggle through a politically and culturally matured consciousness. Having been educated in Oxford, he is now firmly positioned in the center rather than in the margins of English society. Yet, in the course of his retrospective narrative, the older narrator rarely acknowledges his privileged and powerful position from which he interprets and judges both his childhood and childhood friends. In fact, he frequently assumes the position of a fully knowledgeable subject. His use of jargon and patronizing tone produces a condescending distance between himself and the novel's other characters. For example, the narrator uses words and phrases such as "erudition," "mysterious acronyms" (3), and "outstanding knowledge of Hollywood" (7) to refer to the popular culture and dubious sexual experiments he once shared with his former friends. Yet, the older narrator's ironically removed tone of voice implies an educational and class superiority. This distance between the older narrator and the other characters of the novel also suggests that the older narrator speaks for the other characters, particularly for Joseph, and becomes the interpreter and chronicler of their experiences.

Against the older narrator's intentions to appropriate Joseph's voice, Joseph's metaphors of the cocoon and the video camera perpetually undermine the older narrator's desire for authorial control. Ironically, then, the older narrator's desire to be in command of his text remains unfulfilled so that he eventually becomes the intended of his own narrative. Critics such as Benita Parry and Margery Fee have already pointed out that the narrative voice of *The Intended* epitomizes the Naipaulesque anxieties of being absorbed in a mass of immigrants and not being able to live up to the norms of Western 'civilization.' The narrator's desire to become white, his "mourning for white pussy" (246), as his former friend Patel puts it, suggests that he has internalized the stereotype of a black cultural underachievement. From this perspective, the narrator echoes Naipaul's well-known and often criticized dictum that "[h]istory is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (29). The question, however, is whether this denial and distortion of one's own background can be read, and somehow vindicated, as an internalized effect of colonial violence and victimization which characterizes the condition of living in "black skins" and "white masks."

In *The Intended* the older narrator seeks to come to terms with his experience of cultural displacement that shapes the memories of his childhood. Through a stream-of-consciousness technique the novel interweaves the fragmented memories of the younger narrator's Guyanese childhood years with those of his adolescent years in the racially entrenched London of the 1970s. In various sections of the novel, the older narrator remembers the "riddle" his grandmother left him with shortly before his departure to London: "'you is we, remember you is we'" (40). Soon after his arrival in London, however, the narrator finds himself without any family support and forced to live under the miserable conditions of a state-run borstal. Determined to escape his poverty and social marginalization, the younger narrator immerses himself in his literary studies to obtain grades that will eventually admit him to Oxford or Cambridge University. In the course of his studies, the narrator increasingly endorses Naipaul's misconceived judgment that

Caribbean people are a people without historical and cultural achievements, living in misery and ignorance. Thus, his grandmother's reminder of his cultural difference becomes a shameful burden he tries to forget.

Joseph, however, a Jamaican youth and fellow inhabitant of the borstal, upsets the narrator's conviction of black inferiority by questioning the ideological premises of the books which inform the narrator's cultural judgments. To contest the notion of black underachievement on his own terms, Joseph steals a video camera and sets out to capture images of emptiness, stillness, and absence, in short, images which turn nothingness into an object of representation. Joseph also invents the metaphor of the cocoon to describe his ostracized social position. While "cocoon" initially figures as the only word Joseph is able to read in spite of his illiteracy, it later serves the older narrator as a conventional metaphor for black victimization. If the memory of the grandmother's "riddle" (40) assigns the older narrator a social position and cultural identity he must at once assume and contest, we need to question how the older narrator dissociates himself from or shows solidarity with Joseph's radically different forms of agency. Does Dabydeen's *bildungsroman* break through the normative codes of colonialist and revisionist representations of a pathological black underachievement? To discuss these questions, it is important to stress once more that it is Joseph who introduces the notion of the cocoon and who uses the video camera. In an uncanny way both of these metaphors act as performatives in Austin's sense because they effect and enact what they state, namely Joseph's struggle to resist cultural appropriation and obliteration. In turn, it is the older narrator who retrospectively tries to employ the cocoon and the video camera as both conventional metaphors and narrative technique. The performative effects of these metaphors, their ability to normalize Joseph's attempts at resistance and to undermine the older narrator's text, reside in the ways in which Joseph articulates and enacts the idea of nothingness or black failure.

"Nothingness" and the normalizing power of metaphor

Joseph's first formulation of nothingness is couched in an account of how stereotypes of blackness racialize his body and effect a process of psychic disintegration through racist discrimination. To him both racial invisibility and hyper-visibility produce a hegemonic pattern of cultural confinement he sees reflected in the representation of blackness in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. By "weaving his personal history" (102) in and virtually breaking into (95) the narrator's dutiful school readings of Conrad's novella, Joseph articulates his experience of psychological and social imprisonment. He compares his own condition, "the colour 'black'" (101), to Kurtz's elusive and elliptical presence in Marlow's narrative:

> Conrad break he [Kurtz] down to what he is, atoms, nothing, a dream, a rumour, a black man. I know what Kurtz is. When I was in borstal I was rumour. They look at me and see ape, trouble, fist. And all the time I nothing, I sleep and wake and eat like zombie, time passing but no sense of time, nothing to look out of the window at, nothing to look in at, and from and where I should be going. You can't even see yourself, even if you stand in front of mirror, all you seeing is shape. (101)

Transfixed and regulated by the power of the gaze, Joseph turns into the desired object (103) of the hegemonic spectator. Reduced to an "epidermal" construct, to recall Fanon's description of the racist gaze, Joseph's body disappears into "nothingness" only to be named as the fantasmic site of violent and homogenizing projections.

In Joseph's account, the body does not designate a natural and substantial entity. Instead, the body only comes into being and is racially marked through interpellative acts of social confinement and abjection. In other words, being called a rumor, ape, fist, and zombie, Joseph's identity emerges from and consolidates violent divisions between hegemonic cultural identities and their ostracized Others. While this process of cultural Othering establishes rigid borders between social insiders and outsiders, it also interferes with Joseph's self-perception as a socially and culturally positioned being. To him the border between "'inner' and 'outer' worlds," in Butler's words, remains diffuse and functions as "a boundary tenuously maintained for the purposes of social regulation and

control" (*Gender* 133). Joseph's sense of physical presence vanishes as soon as his body is culturally fetishized as a sexual fantasy[58] or defiled as "animal, riot, nigger" (*Intended* 101). Culturally fetishized, the black body is subjected to hyper-visibility. As an object of racist defilement, the black body is excluded from the field of hegemonic vision and subsequently forced into racial invisibility.

For Joseph the invention of an artificial "ritual [. . .] to be real" (101) always turns out to be "unreal" (101). In other words, Joseph's attempts at constructing a stable identity by "collect[ing] things, [. . .] plac[ing] them round [his] room like ritual, like black magic" (101) fail because ultimately Joseph has no power over his life. Instead, it is the warden who, as the representative of the state institution Joseph lives in, has the power to "throw everything all about the place" (101) at his digression. He abuses his power by "aim[ing] vicious kicks [at the boys]" and "enter[ing] the cell of his favourite boy and mount[ing] him donkey-fashion" (103). In the context of institutionalized power, violence obliterates any attempts at "faking" or ritually enacting identity. However, Joseph's distinction between the "real" and the "unreal" also illustrates why his counter-readings of Conrad's text are a form of textual burglary. By questioning the validity and stability of what counts as "real," Joseph misquotes an formalist reading convention that distinguishes between literary modes of appearance and reality. While the narrator complies to the principles of traditional literary criticism, Joseph unknowingly contests such principles. The object of hegemonic cultural representations, Joseph recognizes that there is neither a fully knowledgeable object of representation nor an essential reality that determines artistic representations. Instead, the ritual staging and reiteration of what is named as real produces the effect of reality.[59] External and internalized violence, then, creates the reality of a pervasive deprivation of identity and materializes Joseph's condition of "nothingness." "Nothingness" ought to be read literally as the negation of social existence, as the prolonged slave condition of "social death." In this sense, "nothingness" works as a performative metaphor that regulates the discursive production of power. Being silenced as a "rumor" and criminalized as a social

outcast, Joseph is produced through the politically and socially sanctioned paradigms of a presumed "black pathology." The proliferation of the erroneous hypothesis of an innate black British underachievement and criminality, however, functions ideologically. In performative terms, the hypothesis of a pathological black British underachievement operates as a "constitutive outside" that safeguards a collectively imagined vision of a racially homogeneous nation.

As a form of symbolic and "social death," Joseph's notion of nothingness speaks of his experience of racist violence and thus suggests a historical link between the effects of slavery and of racism. In his ground-breaking sociological and historical study *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson argues that the slave "had no socially recognized existence outside of his master" (5). Similarly, Joseph's social existence is valuable only insofar as he assumes his role as a cultural Other. Further, the violent assaults and injurious speech acts of racism that he suffers are ritualistic deeds that control both the physical and "symbolic instruments" (Patterson 5) of his subjugation. In an early scene in *The Intended*, the narrator remembers how Nasim, one of his friends, suffered a violent assault by a "Paki-bashing pack[]" (13). During his escape, as the narrator recalls, Nasim "saw nothing, felt nothing but a nauseous lightness in his head" (14). Finally, a car crashes into him and almost kills him. Yet, the narrator is overcome with violent feelings against Nasim when he visits him in the hospital. He feels the "strange desire to hurt him, to kick him" because lying bandaged in his bed like "a little, brown-skinned, beaten animal," Nasim carries the "wounds" that "were meant for all of [them], but he had no right to" (14). In this degrading mirror image, the narrator sees "Nasim's impotence which was so maddening" and "shameful[]" (14) as his own impotence and condemnation to violent subjection. The racist violence Nasim suffers effects both his eventual exclusion from his community of friends and his degradation to a slave-like condition, a condition characterized by "direct and insidious violence" as well as by "namelessness and invisibility" (Patterson 1982, 12).

In Joseph's and the narrator's life the normative effects of "nothingness," then, produce identities organized around racial invisibility, shame, self-hatred, and frustration. To avoid perpetual representational violence, however, both characters strive for patterns of identification outside the laws of binary identity formation. They emphasize the impossibility of forming an identity when living in the "Manichean delirium" (Frantz Fanon) of colonially inherited and racist violence. In his foreword to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Homi Bhabha explains that the "collaborations of political and psychic violence *within* civic virtue, alienation within identity, drive Fanon to describe the splitting of the colonial space of consciousness and society as marked by a 'Manichean delirium'" (viv). Through the character of Joseph, Dabydeen's novel clearly explores culturally and psychologically alienated identity patterns. In particular, Joseph's discourse of black nothingness echoes Fanon's notion that an ascribed black inferiority complex serves to hide social " nonexistence" (139). In accordance with Fanon's theory, Dabydeen's novel distinguishes the notion of black nothingness from its existentialist configuration because in Sartre's study the white man may be the Other and alienated, but this Other is also, as Fanon maintains, the master. In both Fanon's and Dabydeen's work, nothingness becomes a catachrestic and materialist version of its prior metaphorical circulation in existentialist discourses. The Manichean delirium, then, depicts an effect of the history of colonialism and racism. It articulates how the effects of racial violence both determine identity formation processes and generate the catachrestic condition of perpetuated social and cultural nonexistence.

More so for Joseph than for the narrator, identity is a negative condition, involving a catachrestic and performative act that subverts manichean identity constructions and modes of representation. Significantly, Joseph's obsession with video films that materialize "nothingness" employs a visual and imaginary language that allows him to translate his oral and musical modes of expression into a similarly experimental and "new language [of] film" (160). His visual language not only cites "nothingness" as a locus for the production

of cultural representations and white rumors, but also questions the truth-value the older narrator apparently bestows upon the written word. In a reading of Dabydeen's novel that distinguishes between written and oral-visual texts, however, neither the older narrator's nor Joseph's use of language participates in the logocentrism and self-presence of speech. More clearly, if the older narrator seeks to control the narrative of the novel, we need to examine the ways in which the older narrator privileges the educated written word and risks overlooking that Joseph's modes of expression are also legible as texts in the Derridean sense.

The eye/I of the Rumor: Film Metaphors and Joseph's Language of Resistance

While the narrator's younger self intends to become his "own photograph [. . .] sharply defined, not like the unrecognizable blurs in Joseph's incompetent films" (245), Joseph wants to "[put] together a montage of images" with "no verbal commentaries" (156-57). He strives to produce a "set of open-ended symbols" (160) to break through both the linear time of realistic narratives and photography's mimetic purpose to represent a "true" image of "reality." Although in certain ways Joseph follows a rather modernist agenda, his search for originality, for "[a] different kind of book" (105), departs from examining the effects of being socially positioned through prior constructions of abject and disavowed cultural origins. In spite of Joseph's technical shortcomings in operating his video camera, his decision to employ a video camera as his chosen means of expression presents both a specific class marker and a configuration of agency. The advent of home video cameras in the seventies provided a broad mass of people access to filming outside the dominant film production studios. Joseph's use of the video camera transfers the medium's own manipulative and unstable properties of image representation into the metaphor of the rumor. Like amateur videos that display abrupt shifts of perspective, a loss of focus, or undefined images, a rumor produces and circulates undefined and distorted forms of representation rather than reality. Indeed, like all film media, the video camera necessarily

articulates reality as what it is, a culturally and politically fabricated illusion. The video camera thus becomes a performative instrument with which to enact the names that define and contain Joseph's identity, namely his social status as an abject and dangerous rumor. In fact, it is with the help of the video camera that Joseph identifies himself as a rumor. As Gayatri Spivak aptly observes, "rumour is not error but primordially (originarily) errant, always in circulation with no clearly definable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency" (*Other Worlds* 213). Thus, a rumor emerges as a contradictory effect of colonial and racist discourses.

The rumor and the video camera correspond to each other insofar as they produce simulated forms of reality and can be used as sites of alternative knowledge production. Apart from the functional similarities between the video camera and the rumor, Joseph links the modalities of the rumor to those normative forms of visuality he employed earlier to describe himself in relation to Conrad's Kurtz as "a rumour, a black man" (101), defined by the way people "look at" (101) him. He compares the video medium to a "mirror" (157) which, as he says, confronts spectators with what they do "not necessarily [. . .] want to see" (157). The camera, then, exposes how the spectators' gaze conditions Joseph as a rumor. While there are certainly more possibilities of showing what one does not want to see, Joseph's configurations reinterpret the notion of rumor itself; the normative effects of inventing and circulating a rumor are no longer directed at Joseph but at his audience. The video camera functions as a silent interpellator of the audience since Joseph uses the camera to change the relation of identification between those who produce and those who are produced by an image. Joseph, then, achieves what Walter Benjamin sees as the most manipulative effect of film, namely that the audience ultimately identifies with the position of the camera. Thus, by using the camera in public spaces, Joseph assumes a position through which he can direct and defamiliarize the public's view of himself. Considering that Joseph stole the camera, the camera also signals Joseph's attempt to appropriate the means of image production and circulation. This strategy emphasizes that those who

interpellate Joseph as a socially abject person are themselves interpellated in a social order that is defined by the history of racism.

The video camera, then, serves as a medium through which Joseph cites and performs the operative modes of oppression that prohibit him from participating in the production and dissemination of cultural representations. We can interpret the camera metaphor as both an authoritative and citational performative speech act because, on the one hand, it names and enacts Joseph's social position, implying the possibility of self-identification and resistance. On the other, as an instrument of visual image production the camera generates derivative images that show the historical construction and racist social conventions that keep Joseph in his assigned place. Furthermore, the comparison between the video camera and the mirror repeats Joseph's explanation and experience of "nothingness," namely of being an unspeakable rumor in the white English society. He remarks that "when I catch sight in the mirror, is nothing I see [. . .] a lump of coal" (100) or "shape"(101). Joseph's video images cite the conditions and effects of social invisibility and forced alienation: By using the camera to misquote, displace, and materialize the effects of being named a rumor, Joseph appropriates and resignifies the racist stereotypes that define him as a rumor and efface his cultural difference in the first place. In this way, the camera gives Joseph provisional agency and makes the notion of rumor legible in what Spivak calls its "writing-like (*scriptible*) character" (*Other Worlds* 214). Put differently, Joseph's video images present the normative effects of rumors in their historicity and open them towards change.

From the older narrator's perspective, however, this kind of resistance turns out to be a terrible failure when the police capture Joseph who, hanging high up in a tree in a posture of suspense, is filming "the invisibility of the wind" (164). After his subsequent escape from jail, Joseph lives in "abominable conditions" (166), virtually incarcerated in his hide-out place. Slowly "going [. . .] mad" (198), he is thrown back into "the darkness" (166) of the unspeakable nothingness and violence of cultural representation and social

abjection. In the eyes of the older narrator, Joseph's video experiments qualify neither as acts of resistance nor of agency. This misled perception is partly caused by the narrator's logocentric reading of Joseph's reiteration of "rumor." The narrator perpetuates, in Spivak's words, a "mistake" already made by the "colonial authorities [which] was [. . .] to impose the requirements of speech in the narrow sense upon something [rumour] that draws its strength from participation in writing in the general sense" (*Other Worlds* 214). The narrator not only ignores that Joseph changes the object and subject positions of viewing and surveillance, but he also fails to realise how Joseph's use of the camera intervenes into the mechanisms of image production itself. In fact, the narrator's binary modes of identity construction dissolve if one reads the metaphor of the camera both performatively and as a technique of visual reproduction.

In performative theory, the authority and reproduction of stereotypes depend on their infinite reiteration and deferral within social and legal contexts. Instead of positing an originary ground, authority is legitimized, as Butler puts it, through its deferral and referral "to an irrecoverable past" (*Bodies* 108). Therefore, stereotypes, like laws, are discursively produced. But, to paraphrase Butler, perpetually citing or identifying with specific stereotypes invokes their prior constitutive authority and generates an excess of power. The excess emerges from the ambiguous mode of citation: while the citation of a stereotype purports to be subject to an originary authority, it simultaneously exposes that the former authority or stereotype has actually not been produced in the past but in the present and is an "effect of citation itself" (*Bodies* 109). The authority and authenticity of an image or stereotype largely depend on simulating a preconceived tradition as *being* authentic. Being a scopic and two-dimensional instrument of image projection, Joseph's camera cites the conventions of a normative gaze with its effects of surveillance and stereotypical categorisations. While his project to materialize and capture the effects of the invisible wind or of a rumor cites his own subjection to racist representations, his particular choice to use a video camera produces excess meaning which intervenes into the traditionally sanctioned

authenticity of racist stereotypes.

In fact, the film medium invests in its own non-originality and reproducibility because, by definition, filmed images do not function as authentic or essential objects and thereby lack the capacity of genuine transmissibility. Through its "transitoriness and reproducibility" (Benjamin 223), a filmed image can no longer be a guardian of history because it replaces a single essence with various copies and pushes into crisis the notion of originality itself. Benjamin suggests that film or photography "detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition." By "permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. The two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition" (221). To reproduce an image or stereotype, then, makes it impossible to derive the image's authority from tradition. Further, a reproduction repositions and recirculates the object of a representation in various discourses. By quoting himself as a reproduction of racist fantasies, Joseph radically questions the authority of this representation and changes its conditions. No longer merely an object, he enters into a process of cultural translation which transforms both subject and object positions in order to contaminate and delegitimize culturally essentialist modes of representation. The video camera, therefore, functions as a crucial and performative metaphor in Joseph's language of resistance because it cites and assigns new meaning to the subjugating effects of racist representations within an economy of unequally distributed power.

While my reading of the narrator may not be completely justified and risks romanticizing Joseph's agency, it intends to show how Dabydeen's novel brings into crisis the notion of resistance itself by opposing the two characters' different ways of resisting racism. It also demonstrates the ways in which the older narrator's own forms of resistance presuppose the concept of a fully conscious and knowledgeable subject and, as a result, lead to a reading of Joseph's agency as a complete failure. In fact, the narrator's insistence on Joseph's failure is closely linked to his endeavor to cast Joseph as a tragic and

calibanesque Conradian anti-hero. On the one hand, the narrator tends to idealize Joseph's musical talents and poetic sensibilities[60] and feels inspired by Joseph's observation that Milton's poetry "is music [. . .] pure sound [. . .] pure soul" (146-47). On the other, the narrator's representation of Joseph's social isolation, his loss of dignity, and his failure to escape his dismal condition echoes Kurtz's last words "[t]he horror! The horror!" (Conrad 64): For, having surrendered his camera to the police, Joseph "[mutters] 'the camera, the camera'" (166). But how can we understand this analogy between Kurtz and Joseph?

In *Heart of Darkness*, Kurtz's final words do not offer a textual closure but rather an excess of meaning. Kurtz's "horror," as numerous critics have argued, expresses the dramatic failure and simultaneous nostalgia for the loss of Western humanist ideals in the project of colonialism. At the same time, it accounts for Kurtz's recognition of his own failure. The "horror," however, also signifies a tantalizing and constitutive terror in the colonizers' psyche, namely the prevailing vision of a primitive and imagined Africa ready for the violent projections of European desires of self-redemption. As the instigator and victim of Europe's colonial enterprise, Kurtz's ambivalent character invites us to reread his character through postcolonial strategies. Kurtz and Joseph resemble each other because they both live in a " strange commingling of desire and hate" (Conrad 65) and, in different ways, occupy a position of social abjection from which they act with an unusual and idealist intensity. More significantly, both characters carry the traits of the romantic yet violent outlaw or even genius. Through Kurtz's character, Marlow tells us, we see "the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the *invisible*" (65, my emphasis). The "threshold of the invisible," though, cannot have the same meaning for Joseph and for Kurtz.

In fact, this "threshold" manifests the irreducible differences between the two characters. While Joseph's video experiments seek to materialize the invisible substance of his experiences of violence and racism, Kurtz enters the realm of myth and legend through

the "threshold of the invisible." He displays a pathetic fallacy which engages in what Chow calls the psychology of a "fascist longing." The words "difference," "wisdom," "truth," and "threshold of the invisible" project an idealist and transparent image that sublimates violence but invariably posits a truth-claim. With regard to Kurtz, the "threshold of the invisible" not only promises an archaic and mythic eternity but also conjures up, in Chow's words, "the force of light, transparency, and idealized image that works in the service of 'interpellating'" the reader ("Fascist" 37). Similarly, Said criticizes the double vision in *Heart of Darkness* because Conrad, despite his imperial critique, "does not give us the sense that he could imagine a fully realized alternative to imperialism" (25). Read in this light, a postcolonial adaptation of Conrad's novella seems problematic. More specifically, to minimize Joseph's ambivalent modes of agency and to reduce him to a tragically failed figure of Conradian import is a premature judgment of forms of resistance that are not readily legible. Simultaneously, to maintain *Heart of Darkness* as a dominant narrative spurs a formal yet serious critique. As Benita Parry puts it, despite its efforts to the contrary, Dabydeen's novel "does not seek to rupture received fictional form" (96).

However, in his retrospective narrative, the older narrator attempts to rectify his youthful misconception and discriminations against Joseph. In fact, he employs Joseph's technique of fragmentary and non-linear filming as a narrative device. Moreover, the narrative's compassionate and confessional tone, evocative of slave narratives, suggests that the narrator rewrites himself as Joseph's intended. Certainly, the older narrator ridicules his younger self's efforts to "white-wash" himself in the tradition of British-Caribbean writers of an older generation. Yet, his reading of Joseph's eventual suicide does not break with this tradition but perpetuates the exclusionary practices of "received fictional form." Indeed, the narrator's interpretation of Joseph's suicide negates Joseph's practices of performative agency because such practices still remain illegible to him. His misreading of Joseph's agency, then, emerges from a series of misconceptions already manifest in his younger self.

From the beginning of the novel, Joseph's notion of "nothingness" ironically counters the narrator's perception of Joseph's inability to think in empirical and abstract categories. "[U]nable to remember a year, a name, an episode," as the narrator remarks, Joseph "lacked" (88) the capacity to acquire encyclopedic knowledge. The term "nothingness," however, recalls Kant's idea of the "Thing-in-itself" as well as the phenomenological and existential philosophies of Hegel and Sartre. Joseph's materialist account of and his failure to film "nothingness" argues for the impossibility of pure reason or the "Thing-in-itself." For, the culturally and socially specific history of the object (i.e., of Joseph) introduces a permanent disruption into the object-subject relationship. In other words, if Kant's idea of Reason eliminates a historically specific object from its own discourse, then this idea also overlooks the political and economic conditions in which the processes of object and subject formation take place.To exclude the role of the object from subject-object relationships obscures the ways in which the object is racially produced and resists its elimination. Joseph's notion of "nothingness" designates the space of a negativity through which, in Asha Varadharajan's words, the "resistance of the object to the subject's identifications" (xi) becomes legible. It foregrounds the object's historically and psychologically particular position in the processes of postcolonial identity formation.

The different citations and reiterations of "nothingness" and invisibility, enacted in Joseph's filming, hold in suspense the contradictions involved in processes of cultural identification. By trying to record "nothingness" with a video camera, Joseph not only dramatizes his oxymoronic conditions of identity formation, but he also punctuates the novel with metaphors such as the "colourlessness, the sightlessness of air" (133). Joseph's fascination with nothingness often reveals his desire to be free of the pressures and contradictions of identity but to maintain a tangible essence of identiy: he wishes to be "body-less, weight-less, [. . .] yourself, no dependency, just you and space" (134). At the same time, Joseph's metaphors of nothingness also articulate the possibility of resistance against racist oppression. He asserts that "blackness" is "coal to feed flames" and it is the

invisible "wind that spread fires" (134). The younger narrator, however, attributes these metaphors to Joseph's general incompetence and sees them as "unrealistic half-formed ideas" (107). Yet, these fragmentary metaphors not only make Joseph's filming legible as forms of agency, but they also escape and even undermine the narrator's authorial control and thus assert themselves as the indelible traces of Joseph's presence. It is in this sense that the narrator ironcially becomes Joseph's intended.

Joseph's metaphors, then, give meaning to his experience of cultural dispossession and marginalisation and, in turn, endow him with a symbolic instrument of control. Considered as a whole, Joseph's configurations of "nothingness" operate metaphorically and produce memories and fissures in the younger narrator's alienated consciousness which will enable him to write the novel in the future. Read as individual images, however, Joseph's pictures of "nothingness" function metonymically because all images are contiguous with one another. In fact, the metaphorical force of Joseph's images of "nothingness" comes into full play only through the older narrator's editing process, his montage of Joseph's images into a narrative of cultural dispossession rather than of resistance.[61] Ultimately, the older narrator appropriates Joseph's voice by transforming Joseph's performative use of metaphor into totalizing metaphors of victimization. Furthermore, Joseph's fragmentary, non-sequential, and dream-like film images resemble what Kobena Mercer, along with Brian Torode and David Silverman, identifies as a Black British Cinema strategy of "'interruption,' which seek[s] [. . .] 'to enter critically into existing configurations [of discourse] to re-open the closed structures into which they have ossified'" (Torode and Silverman qtd. in Mercer 56). Technically, this strategy functions metaphorically and metonymically. It undermines the anthropological gaze of a 'realist' documentary by privileging a "process of selection, combination and articulation of signifying elements" (Mercer 88), and serves both as an "embryonic articulation of something new which does not fit into a pregiven category" (54) and the positioning of "identity as a 'problem'" (87).[62] Read in the light of recent Black British film theory,

Joseph's film segments, video stills, and cuts break through the central perspective of racist representations and visualize the contested space of cultural identifications. The narrator, however, is unable to read or to acknowledge the "embryonic articulation" of cinematically coded resistance in Joseph's work. By privileging the written word as a means of expression and achievement, he demotes Joseph's forms of resistance as a failure caused by his "handicap [. . .] [of] illiteracy" (107).

Notes from the Cocoon: The Untranslatability of Resistance?

Joseph's only attempt at writing occurs shortly before his self-immolation. Locked in the darkness of his hide-out place, he copies the word "cocoon" from a piece of newspaper and scratches it into the ground. Unable to read its meaning, Joseph impatiently awaits the narrator "to come and interpret" (194).Yet, when the narrator arrives, Joseph emerges from his Kurtzian invisibility and provides his own performative reading of the word. Joseph

> emerged from the gloom as suddenly as he had disappeared [. . .] and led me closer to the marks he had made in the mud. [. . .] 'It's me, all of that is me,' he explained . . . 'Here,' he said, . . . 'here is C and this one here is O and another C and two more O's, and N.'[. . .] I thought he was being crazy as ever, seeing things with that curious illiteracy that made everything he uttered appear to be visionary, the product of genius. 'Look! C is half O,' he continued to jabber, 'it nearly there, but when it form O it breaking up again, never completing.'[. . .] 'A is for apple,' he babbled, 'B for bat, C is for cocoon, which is also coon, N is for nut, but really nuts, N is for nothing, N is for nignog. Can't you see, all of it is me.' (194-95)

Instead of assigning a clear referent to the word "cocoon," Joseph reads it through its onomatopoetic qualities, as an assemblage of circles and half-circles. Joseph's "reading" is crucial because it implies a genealogy of rhetorical origins that dates back to the eighteenth century, the century of the dictionary, slavery, and class polarization within the domestic boundaries of England.[63] Philosophers of the eighteenth century, such as Ephraim Lessing, believed that onomatopoeia was the creative origin of all languages, that words looked like the things they named. Although both metaphor and onomatopoeia operate as

motivated signs through resemblance, they were employed to different ends. While in the idealistic and Romantic tradition of the eighteenth century, metaphor was pressed to form a harmonious and transcendental whole, onomatopoeia was thought to express the musical and physical qualities of poetry.[64] To a certain extent both tropes defined the opposite poles of rhetorical binarism. Joseph's explanation of the word "cocoon," however, cannot be restricted to this paradigm of rhetorical dualism, for he treats the word performatively and turns it into a political sign that enacts and names what confines him.

Giving a name to each letter of the word, Joseph disrupts the referential yet illusory unity of a metaphor whose dominant connotations imply a protective enclosure. For him, the metaphorical meaning of cocoon does not manifest itself in an analogous relationship between tenor and vehicle. Instead, he breaks the vehicle into its components. While the individual letters usually remain semantically invisible in the total signification of a proper word, Joseph's fragmentary reading posits each letter as a signifying difference. In this way he inflects each letter with the difference of class and race. If Joseph understands the metaphor of the cocoon performatively, then the regulatory force of this metaphor lies in its function to name and confer a totalizing relation between tenor and vehicle: "N is for nignog." Put differently, in Joseph's alphabet "N" designates nothing else but "nignog." The productive function of the cocoon metaphor emerges from a fragmented reading of the differences hidden within the relation between vehicle and tenor, implied by Joseph's observation that "C is half O." Where "C" may signify a lack, "O" may suggest an excess of meaning. Joseph's metaphorical reading of the "cocoon" breaks up the symbolic order, suggested by the nursery rhyme used for learning the alphabet, into the traumatic particularities of the Black British immigrant condition.

It is of course well known that English nursery rhymes by no means designate a politically innocent pedagogy of language acquisition. In Joseph's case, the nursery rhyme contests what it is conventionally supposed to install, namely the symbolic order of language. In Joseph's genealogy of language it is not the innocent onomatopoetic figure

that forms the ground and figure of language but the intrinsic violence within language and the racist violence that instigates the symbolic order of language. Joseph's reading of the cocoon metaphor exposes how the symbolic order covers over and contains the social and cultural contradictions it violently seeks to unify in order to produce language as a normative reference system. Enclosure and progressive growth, the conventional connotations of "cocoon," clearly refer to a bourgeois notion of education. The terms emphasize the preponderance of the individual who must pass through a linear and progressive personal development so as to fulfill an educational *telos* and to emerge as a rational human-being. In this sense, the cocoon metaphor ironically reflects the older narrator's attempt at writing a conventional *bildungsroman*, an attempt that in part fails through Joseph's disruptive use of metaphors and images. To Joseph, however, the *telos* of education is foreclosed, and the notion of a productive enclosure has quite literally turned into the painful isolation of cultural and physical imprisonment. To name the "cocoon" as a space of confinement and absence, then, employs a catachrestic reading of metaphor and "commit[s] a disloyalty against identity" (Butler, *Bodies* 220). Indeed, to Joseph, language or a "word is cat with nine separate lives" (Dabydeen, *Intended* 103). A cat, however, not merely designates the arbitrariness of language, but it also connotes a "cat"-o'-nine-tails (*tales*), a whip with nine knotted lashes used for the flogging of slaves. On the one hand, through Joseph's proverbial and catachrestic use of metaphor we can detect how metaphor, in Wilson Harris' words, arbitrates those "unfinished shapes of reality" ("Interview" 105) through the contiguities of time.[65] On the other, the normative effects of language "put iron-bar one by one in [the] spacious room" (Dabydeen, *Intended* 95) of Joseph's particular forms of artistic expression and continuously disclaim and debunk his creolized use of language.

The performative and productive capacities of the "cocoon" derive from the term's citational and catachrestic inscriptions. Apart from the intertextual references to Fanon's

gaze, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, the cocoon metaphor also bears the signature of prison writing. "The mark of prison writing," Ioan Davies observes, "is the fragmentary scratching in the walls of a cell, the articulation of hope against the imposed textuality of incarceration" (107). These scratchings both recall and counter the "violent space of the prison" (74) that produces them. In the context of Joseph's fragmented way of reading, "cocoon" does not represent but enacts the "violent space" of a racist society. His emphasis on the visual texture of "cocoon" disposes of the received binary structure of both metaphor and identity. Joseph's focus on visual and spatial sound images does not so much refer to an onomatopoetic language composition but to "the voiceless, sightless readability of a mechanized physical structure" (Davies 60) imposed by incarceration. In the context of prison writing, according to Davies, "expression" is pushed "back to the 'frontier of writing'" (161) in its larger or, in Derrida's terminology, graphematic sense. In other words, it formulates and circulates the *différance* of meaning production, namely that which must be excluded in the constitution of hegemonic reference systems. Yet, from the reading halls of Oxford's university library, the older narrator provides a regulatory reading of both Joseph's death and the "cocoon" that is based on his psychic investment in the character of Joseph. It is a reading that ultimately writes Joseph out of the text.

Upon discovering the similarities between Joseph's Creole and medieval English during his studies at the University of Oxford, the narrator feels haunted by Joseph who "keeps breaking in to the most burglar-proof of institutions [Oxford University] [. . .] drawing [him] back to [his] dark self" (195-96). Relating Joseph's riddle to a scene in *Sir Gaiwain*, the narrator begins to detect what the "the cocoon" means. Joseph

> was telling [him] that he was half-formed, like the jelly in the cocoon, like the C trying to round itself to an O, getting there with great effort, but breaking up again because of the police, the Boy's Home, the absent father, the dead mother, the lack of education, the poverty, the condition of blackness. Even the quest for completion was absurd, for O signified nothing, the word ended with N for nothing. (196)

Here, each letter of the "cocoon" has a clearly defined meaning and builds up to a totalising picture of a pathological black identity. By attributing a totality of black oppression and victimization to the "cocoon," the narrator reinscribes the binary and normative structure of metaphor. Racism functions as a closed system to which resistance seems "absurd" (196).

While Joseph emphasized the infinite fragmentation and discursive qualities of cultural representations, the narrator reinscribes the totalising effects of metaphor when he translates Joseph's interpretation of "cocoon" into the sociological narrative of victimization. What remains untranslatable to the narrator is Joseph's attempt to articulate cultural representations based on the contradictions between visibility and invisibility. Again, the narrator fails to see that Joseph's notion of nothingness does not designate an empty space but a discursive negativity from which to draw agency. Rather, inspired by medieval poetry, the narrator's understanding of Joseph's metaphor fortifies his belief in a traditional education as an escape route from poverty and discrimination. As Joseph's interpreter, the narrator unwittingly commits acts of treachery inherent in all acts of cultural translations. By reinterpreting Joseph's metaphor, the narrator posits Joseph as his "constitutive outside," his tragically failed Other whose dignity he is called upon to save. The narrator's retrospective narrative, then, relies on Joseph's position of social abjection. Yet, rather than safeguarding the narrator's presumably self-conscious identity, Joseph's abject position and often obscure metaphorical language interrupt and destabilize the linear flow of the narrator's narrative. Joseph's metaphors of the cocoon and the video camera ultimately resist the narrator's text and thus inadvertently effect what they were to symbolize in the first place. In order to emerge as a self-conscious and matured subject, the narrator must guard against or sublimate the disruptive effects of Joseph's legacy.

The narrator's reinscription of Joseph's metaphor subsequently generates a textual closure. He acknowledges Joseph's sensuous forms of resistance as long as they are legible and classifiable in a conceptual frame familiar to the narrator, namely in the tradition of medieval poetry. From this perspective he is able to appropriate the fragmented and

creolized configurations of Joseph's agency to authenticate and punctuate his narrative without having to read Joseph's agency on its own terms. The transposition of Joseph's metaphor into the narrator's educational narrative renders a classical movement of Hegelian sublation, an act Derrida defines as the metaphysics or "white mythology" of metaphor. In other words, while Joseph articulates the cocoon as a political signifier inscribed with both the physical experience of violence and visual images as expressions of his agency, the narrator negates these inscriptions. He binds the semantic excess released through Joseph's reading of the cocoon into a totalizing metaphor of oppression. The idealistic thrust in the narrator's act of sublation consists, first, in erasing the social contradictions Joseph names through the cocoon metaphor. Second, it resides in positing a homogeneous notion of cultural identity that mirrors the narrator's own desire for a holistic identity. Thus, the normative ideal of an essential and homogeneous identity informs the narrator's notions of oppression and liberation alike. Similarly, the narrator's misreading of Joseph's performative uses of "nothingness" transforms Joseph into a heroically failed and sublime sacrifice which, once more, perpetuates, instead of breaking through, the close correspondence between Kurtz and Joseph. This alignment between the two characters points towards an unbroken continuation between the older narrator and his younger self and thus defines who holds sway over the narrative's textual production.

Further, the narrator underestimates the significance of Joseph's self-immolation. To him, Joseph's death, like Kurtz's, either makes a final statement about the impossibility of living the humanist and universalistic ideal of equality or performs an extreme act of resistance implied by the recurrent metaphors of both the fire and the wind that spread the fire. The narrator perceives Joseph's suicide as an extremist and desperate act of failure. What he refuses to acknowledge is that Joseph's death signals a radical gesture of subaltern speech similar to the suicide of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri Gayatri Spivak discusses at the end of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?." Bhaduri's and Joseph's suicide stage an "absurd" act of subaltern ventriloquism, "a case of delirium rather than sanity" ("CSS" 104). In both

of these cases it is clear that the subaltern has no representational voice in the strict sense but is the site through which dominant discourses speak. Such "absurd" and difficult to read subaltern gestures contest the myth of totalizing power structures and underscore the contradictions within the subject. To the narrator, Joseph's death nevertheless symbolizes nothing but a "lack of privilege, [a] stupid way of living and dying" (198). Read from a performative perspective, however, Joseph's suicide signifies a second death that follows social death.

Usually, a second death involves a symbolic death after physical or clinical death. Encumbered and defined by violent and incessant cultural representations, Joseph already lives in a condition of social death. However, both social and clinical death signify a radical cut which explodes the established network of references. Although Joseph's second death performs the negation of a negation, it does not necessarily generate a productive site of cultural identification. Instead, if we read Joseph's suicide as a second death that negates his social death, it implies a certain contiguity between death and metaphor. The notion of a cross-cultural imagination, Wilson Harris suggests, involves the function of metaphor as "a caveat or paradox [that] replaces ideology or monolity" ("Metaphor" 3). The use of metaphor becomes a kind of negative movement "sustaining unconscious elements of psyche" (1). In Harris's prose and fiction the paradox of metaphor enables a return of the dead and envisages parallel and simultaneous time zones that forestall closure. In this way, the second death breaks through linear time frames and exceeds the conventions of mimetic and 'realistic' cultural representations. In the reading practice of the older narrator, Joseph's suicide does not entail the possibility of a textual opening. On the contrary, by absorbing the "nutrients of quiet scholarship" and growing "strong in this library, this *cocoon*" (198, my emphasis), the older narrator will avoid to repeat Joseph's "stupid way of living and dying" (198). As a meaningless death in the eyes of the narrator, Joseph's suicide gives rise to a textual closure.

To conclude my discussion of *The Intended*, the dismissal of Joseph's strategies

of resistance remains ambivalent as it leaves the narrator's own position as producer and subject of cultural representations unquestioned. On the one hand, Joseph's transfiguration into a sublime object celebrates "nothingness" as a positive force of absolute negativity and conjectures, in Dabydeen's own words, "the possibility of absolute originality" ("Interview" 29). From this perspective, Joseph's character would convey the utopian vision of an authentic and essential existence outside the constraints of power. On the other, Joseph's sublime status not only reproduces the ideological fallacies of Conrad's novella, but dissolves the political and psychological contradictions of "nothingness," diminishing Joseph's agency in a gesture of sublime celebration. In this way, the narrator maintains a position in which he must interpret the void resulting from absolute negativity. Moreover, the narrator's various attempts at writing are inspired by Joseph, or, more precisely, by the construction of Joseph's resistance as a sublime failure. The narrator not only emphasises a presumably higher abstract value in the written word and opposes it to the oral and visual configurations of Joseph's "maroon" language, but also appropriates Joseph's insights and modes of expression for his own project of writing. Instead of acknowledging Joseph's performative modes on their own terms, the narrator retranslates them into both the narrative conventions of received literary traditions and identity. This act of translation, however, is not fully successful since the older narrator's text cannot fully control Joseph's performative use of metaphors. In particular, the metaphors of the video camera and the cocoon undermine and question the narrator's authorial intentions, ironically making him Joseph's intended. Yet, it would be a mistake to overestimate the effect of Joseph's agency. After all, Joseph does not occupy a position of power and his symbolic resistance is vulnerable. Indeed, the narrator's strategy of appropriating Joseph's language and forms of expression forecloses Joseph's agency and speaks for him which, in turn, generates and safeguards the position of the narrator as writer. In this way, the narrator transforms Joseph into his own "constitutive outside" necessary both to produce the narrator's identity as a postcolonial writer and to secure the psychological boundaries of

this identity.[66] This move precisely translates Butler's critique of the Lacanian real into a postcolonial context so that the authorial appropriation of Joseph's agency shows the vulnerability and dangers of performative strategies of resistance and my suggestion to rethink metaphor in performative terms. Indeed, metaphor may always work according to and within the theoretical framework one applies to it. At best, Joseph's agency requests that it be read on its own terms as a language of resistance that is not always fully legible. What ultimately escapes the older narrator—but not Joseph—is the necessity to say things wrong in order to destabilize and resignify received literary norms of cultural representation.

Chapter 6

Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* : Genealogy, Ethnicity, and Cultural Translation

At first reading Lee's novel seems to be a melodramatic family saga narrating the rise and fall of what Kae, the narrator and writer, ironically calls the *"Temple of Wonged Women"* (209). But the story told is not one of absolute female victimization. Rather, by representing the lives of the Wong women through the family history, on the one hand, and through the history of racist policies inflicted on Chinese people by discriminatory Canadian immigration laws,[67] on the other, Kae's narrative offers a genealogy of female empowerment and disempowerment. While some of these women act as 'female patriarchs,' others seize control over their own lives and bodies but remain locked in a field of power that generates cultural essentialism as a normative force in the construction of ethnic, gender, and national identities. Organized through concept-metaphors such as incest, motherhood, and ethnicity, Lee's novel explores the ways in which these metaphors naturalize and destabilize culturally and historically produced stereotypes about genderized and racialized subjectivities. Sexist and racist stereotypes circulate within and outside the female and ethnic community. They produce a normative division between spatially and temporally constructed outside and inside positions of cultural identities. In other words, in the white and the Chinese community, sexist and racist attitudes regulate the boundaries of ethnic communities by establishing who is and who is not an accepted member of a particular ethnic community.

Kae's genealogy gains its thematic and political tension through a double narrative movement which pits the normative politics of cultural authenticity against the inevitably heterogeneous effects of cultural displacement. The narrative investigates how the older Wong women, particularly Mui Lan and Fong Mei, become complicit with and reproduce the patriarchal value system they live in. Nostalgically clinging to an idealized past and to a blood-based notion of motherhood and family lineage, these women help maintain the

hermetically closed boundaries of the Chinese community. They construct ethnicity and gender as naturalized and exclusive identity categories in order to protect their community against racist attacks and safeguard their belief in cultural authenticity. At the same time, the novel dramatizes how this system of cultural closure disintegrates at its borders and produces incestuous relationships. Incest metaphorically and literally organizes Kae's narrative. Her narrative negotiates the conceptual poles between extreme cultural sameness and difference through which the metaphor of incest conventionally works as a taboo in anthropological and sociological contexts. In Lee's novel, the metaphor of incest serves to destabilize normative and essentialist configurations of ethnicity and gender. The novel's double performative movement operates as narrative technique and is inscribed in the dramatic frame of Kae's narrative, consisting of a list of *dramatis personae* in the form of a family tree, a prologue, and an epilogue. Suggesting a circular and historically grounded narrative structure, both the prologue and the epilogue are set at the turn of the twentieth century. They provide the *mise en scène* for events of early Chinese-Canadian history by dramatizing the return of the bodily remains of Chinese laborers of the Canadian Pacific Railway to China. Narrating the encounter between Kelora and Gwei Chang, the future male patriarch of the Wong family, the prologue and the epilogue represent a founding yet ambiguous moment in the history of the Wong clan.

The encounter between Kelora and Gwei Chang contests the legitimacy of all future politics of cultural authenticity the Wong women employ at a later stage of the narrative. In fact, the notion of cultural authenticity merely replicates the founding myth of empty geographical spaces "dissimulated by savagery" as a "characteristic" marker of "colonial encounter[s]" (Hulme 3). Put differently, in the historical context of conquest and migration the fantasy of cultural authenticity derives from the assumption that prior to a violent or non-violent intercultural encounter different cultures existed in a state of cultural virginity and autonomy. This assumption overlooks that in the imaginary of the arrivants the "new" land and its inhabitants were already prefabricated and molded in the exotic

image of either noble savagery or abject wilderness. Set in British Columbia at the turn of the nineteenth century, Kelora's and Gwei Chang's meeting takes place in a colonized and colonial space already marked by cross-cultural relations between First Nation peoples and Chinese immigrants. Read as a colonial encounter, Kelora and Gwei Chang's relationship is predicated on acts of cultural translations which displace and fuse presumably stable narratives of identity. Their relationship eventually replaces a consanguine family lineage with an intercultural one. Furthermore, the metaphor of the bones generates and regulates the narrative patterns of Kae's subsequent story. The bones introduce a genealogical and circular narrative, for they signify the fragmented, "homesick" (Lee 13) identities of "overseas chinese [sic]" (11). Occupying a personified subject position in the text, the bones "whisper[]" to Gwei Chang "with yearnings from the same secret places in his own heart" (12). They allow him to connect his own experience of immigration to the history of the Chinese in Canada, participating in both settler experiences, such as life in the wilderness, cabin fever, and trade, and the segregated conditions of early Chinese immigrant life. To survive in Canada, Gwei Chang requires an identity that is at once continuous and discontinuous. Like the Chinese railway workers before him, he decides to "piece himself together again from scattered, shattered bone and then endure" (13).

But Gwei Chang overlooks that his reading of the bones and his task of returning them to China generate normative patterns of identification. For the bones also signify a physical material core of identity, implying that a coherent and grounded subject existed "naturally" in the past but outside the effects of history and can "again" be reassembled and recuperated. They emphasize an original place of belonging in which identity is not questioned but remains whole because, read as metaphor, the return of the bones to China introduces and amplifies the distinction between a "true" home or national identity and a transient, unidentifiable, foreign place of exile. Moreover, the return of the bones presents an institutional demand or law implemented by the "old men" (2) in China and the Chinese Benevolent Associations in Victoria, B.C. To fulfill the demand reinforces the strong ties

between Chinese people living in Canada and in China through racial consanguinity and obedience. Gwei Chang, then, was selected for the "bone-searching expedition" (1) because his hair was "not just black but blue-black" and "[h]e had two whorls on the crown of his head - the sign of a nonconformist" (2). Against Gwei Chang's own doubts about his aptitude for the task, he was told to "believe" in his "mission" (2). He would be successful as long as he maintained the cultural imperative of non-assimilation and obeyed the order of the patriarchs of the Chinese society.

Gwei Chang's task to retrieve the bones and to foster a cultural identity untouched by his migration experiences establishes what Ann Laura Stoler calls a discursive network of "'invisible ties'" (206). By inflecting Foucault's theoretical account of a genealogical and discursive production of sexuality with the category of race, Stoler effectively argues that the scopic technologies that make the human body visible and controllable produce a gendered and a racialised Other. "Racism," she argues, "is not only a 'visual ideology' where the visible and somatic confirms the 'truth' of the self," but it also "relate[s] the visual markers of race to the protean hidden properties of different human kinds" (205). In other words, racism presupposes a coherent yet invisible subject that is already in place and tractable through an assignment of somatic phenomena. For example, Gwei Chang's appointment as the retriever of bones rests on such a process of racial marking because he is elected on grounds of the old men's belief in his stead-fast cultural identity (the "nonconformist") manifest in his "blue-black" hair ("the sign of the nonconformist"). Thus, cultural value systems are physically and racially marked and *vice versa*. The category of race naturalizes the historically and culturally devised assumptions of genderised and racialised subjectivities. Subsequently, 'race' can be and has been engaged in the definition of who can claim authentic membership in specific ethnic communities. As an act of reconfirmed authentic cultural membership, Gwei Chang's mission can be read as one that secures a cultural identity based on pure cultural origins. His identification with the bones internalizes and stabilizes binary identity concepts as a given truth and

naturalizes, again, the potential identity conflict inscribed in the "shattered, scattered" condition of the bones. Yet, the "palpability and intangibility" of totalising discourses "make[] race," as Stoler remarks, " slip through reason and rationality. For it, like nationalism, is located in 'invisible ties' and hidden truths, unspoken assumptions about morality and character" (206).

By examining the shifting power relations within the Wong family through a genealogical narrative perspective, Kae's narrative sets out to disclose the "unspoken assumptions" that inform and bring to crisis the family's nativist identity constructions. Posed against teleological historiographies, the novel is organized into various narrative fragments, each titled with a character's name and a specific date, interrupting linear time frames and destabilizing holistic notions of subjectivity. As narrator and character, Kae participates in her own narrative and is, like the narrator in Dabydeen's *The Intended*, subject to the other characters' critique. Similar to Joseph, Seto Chi, Kae's nanny, intrudes and dislocates Kae's frequently romanticizing and confessional account of the Wong history. In a sequence called "Feeding the Dead," both the living and the dead women meet at an imaginary 'round table' speculating whether Kae's story "isn't a story of several generations, but of one individual thinking collectively" (189). Thus, the narrative does not offer a single authoritative perspective, but various beginnings from which to read Kae's story. Instead, Kae's genealogy, like all genealogies in the Foucaultian sense, resists both the idea and the search of singular origins. It is not surprising, therefore, that the reader finds the diagram of the Wong family tree before the actual beginning of the novel. The family tree, I suggest, operates as a concept-metaphor with performative effects and subversively maps the project of the novel.

Conventionally, family trees serve to establish and secure the power of male lineage, and represent time and family relations in a chronological manner asserting a singular ancestral descent from which all other family branches develop. Operating through empirical techniques of data collection and classification, the image of the family tree

signifies both objectivity and originality. By articulating a truth-claim to both the notion of family in general and the lineage it portrays, in particular, it generates normative effects. As a corollary, the family tree naturalizes heterogeneous and power-invested relationships and events in terms of a monolithic dynasty. The regulatory power emanating from and produced by such representations of family historiography neutralizes the politically laden concept of the family. Sanctioned by God and traditions from times immemorial, the notion of family does not need to be discursively and culturally situated but can be placed into a space outside of discourse where "family" appears as a given unit of human relations and reproduction.

These regulatory modes also present the family tree as a concept-metaphor that exerts an originary violence by reducing and subsuming gender and ethnic differences to one common denominator, namely the authenticity of cultural and familial descent. In *Disappearing Moon Cafe* the imagined singularity of family descents institutes the patriarchically organized family as a microcosmic and nuclear unit of society and safeguards the internal and external boundaries of both the Wong family and the Chinese community. Kae's narrative suggests that the exclusive and patriarchal structure of the Wong family is conditioned and produced by Canadian immigration policies that commodify the female body, in Kae's words, as an "unidentified receptacle" (31), effecting both the criminalisation and relentless subjugation of the female body as guarantor for male progeny and ethnic survival. If concept-metaphors generally produce an excess of meaning or "hidden truths" (Stoler 206), Kae's family tree is equally subject to the self-deconstructive properties of metaphor. As it happens, the particular family relations contained in the hegemonic metaphor of the family tree erode the metaphor's historical claim to singular and pure genealogical origins altogether. In short, the family tree metaphor turns on itself and appears as a catachresis. While this catachrestic turn undoes metaphor's dialectical operations, this turn cannot be sufficiently explained by the deconstructive movements of metaphor. Instead, the cultural particularities, displacements,

and constraints that shape and produce the family relations of the Wong clan resist hegemonic and Western family concepts enshrined in the conventional meanings of the family tree metaphor. The family tree's erased inscriptions of cultural difference, family crisis, and incest dislocate and modify both established reference systems of consanguine family relations and metaphor's operative modes of sameness.

Looking at the Wong family tree, then, reveals that its lineage neither begins with a member of the Wong family nor with a racially uncontaminated origin. Instead, it begins with the relationship between Shi'atko, a First Nation woman, and Chen Gwok Fai, an early Chinese immigrant, railroad worker, Gold Mountain man, and adventurer. The beginning, therefore, does not keep its promise of a family lineage but signifies a family genealogy of cultural disruptions that challenges the legitimacy of single cultural origins and unequivocal national belonging. One might further assume that Chen Gwok Fai and Shi'atko's union resulted in the birth of Kelora Chen whose relationship with Wong Gwei Chang instigates an illegitimate family lineage passed off as legitimate. Chen Gwok Fai, however, is not Kelora's biological father because when he encountered Shi'atko, she lived with a dying "white man" and "had a daughter" (1990, 7). But even this story of origins cannot claim authority, for "Chen told [. . .] lots of strange, elusive stories, but who knows which ones were true and which ones were fragments of his own fantasy?" (7). Thus, the lineage of the Wong family tree begins with what Kae later calls a "(trans)parent" (127), a supplemental parent outside the official blood relations. From within its normative functions as a concept-metaphor, the Wong family tree reveals a number of gaps which signify culturally mixed liaisons and illegitimacy rather than authenticity and consanguinity. As a metaphor, the family tree cannot be reduced to the vehicle of a narrative to be told. Instead, it functions as a further supplement at the origin of cultural identity, a supplement that is both inscribed with the violent experiences of the Wong women and facilitates Kay's narrative.

The question of legitimacy becomes even more problematic when considering the

position of the legally sanctioned relations in the family tree, namely the status of Lee Mui Lan and Wong Ting An's wife. Mui Lan, Wong Gwei Chang's legal wife, came from China to join her husband about 15 years after their marriage. Although she can claim the rights and authority of a legal wife, the family tree does not depict any of her ancestors which would emphasize a racially homogeneous lineage. Significantly, the tree emphasises a maternal lineage only in relation to Kelora whose ancestors were not Chinese and whose marriage to Wong Gwei Chang was not performed within the legal framework of either the white Canadian or Chinese law. Although the family tree shows that Wong Ting An, Kelora and Gwei Chang's son, enters a relationship with two women, it does not attempt to explain their legitimacy. However, Kae's narrative reveals that his illicit relation to Fong Mei results in two daughters and one son who believe Mui Lan's son, Wong Choy Fuk, to be their authentic father. Wong Ting An's legal wife is not even named in the diagram but merely noted as "French-Canadian." Her marriage produces a son, Morgan, whose relationship with his half-sister, Suzanne, results in the last but not surviving Wong male. The Wong family tree, to pun on Major Plunkett's attempt at establishing his colonial "ances-tree" (87) in Walcott's *Omeros*, seems to be an "inces-tree" and thus a catachrestic rearticulation of the regulatory forces conventionally assigned to the family tree metaphor.

A catachrestic configuration of the family tree metaphor also effects a genealogical narrative with shifting perspectives and thematic foci through which the narrator can negotiate her own doubts about writing a female family saga. Kae, for instance, admits that she

> prefer[s] to romanticize them [the Wong women] as a lineage of women with passion and fierceness in their veins. In each of their woman-hating worlds, each did what she could. If there is a simple truth beneath their survival stories, it must be that women's lives, being what they are, are linked together. Mother to daughter, sister to sister. (145-46)

While Kae's narrative certainly explores how mother-daughter relationships shape female subjectivities, it neither offers a "simple truth" that connects women on account of their victimization, nor does it accept the professed ontological status of women as "being what

they are." On the contrary, in other sections of her narrative, Kae doubts that each woman did what she could, and what she envisions as "passion and fierceness" she often articulates as cruelty and greed in other contexts of her narrative. That her foremothers and mother lived in and reproduced "woman-hating worlds" points towards the narrative's genealogical project. It underscores how much of these "women's lives" has been predetermined by an already existing and oppressive structure of sexual identity and female desire which *a priori* regulates the formation of female subjectivities. Female identities, then, may rather be considered as the effect of normative power discourses that define and control sexuality, modes of representation, and the female body. Kae's compassionate solidarity with and account of her mother's and foremother's lives perhaps derive from the shared experience of bodily subjugation. The female identities produced by "woman-hating worlds" must be read as an effect of both imposed and naturalized discourses of ethnicity, female sexuality, and consanguinity.

"Look! A Chinaman": Interpellations of Ethnicity and Gender

Kae's narrative repeatedly mentions the unpredictable and manipulative "power of language" (180, 184). While the stories of Kae's foremothers dramatize the subjugative and disembodying effects of language, Kae's narrative comments explore those productive effects of language that bring the referentiality of meaning into crisis. In either case, however, the regulatory and productive operations of language cannot be considered as binary or neatly separated operations. Instead, they condition each other and converge at the site of both the body and interpellation. This section examines the subjugating and constitutive effects of naming and interpellation. A brief discussion of Kelora's marginal role provides my point of departure, for it brings into focus how interpellative acts can function as a form of agency and articulate ethnicity as a practice rather than as a fixed identity. In Kae's textual archeology, Kelora's character negotiates various trajectories of cultural representation which, in the course of the novel, facilitate the many beginnings of

Kae's narrative. Further, we need to examine the ways in which the gaze compels essentialist female and ethnic identities and punctuates the relationship between Kae's great-grandmother and grandmother, Mui Lan and Fong Mei.

Appearing only in the prologue and epilogue of Lee's novel, Kelora occupies a decentered yet significant position. Similar to the dramatic and narrative functions of a prologue, she signifies the permeability of boundaries and origins. As a dramatic device, a prologue is always an essentially mixed discourse and acts as a critical intervention and guide before the narrative. In Kae's narrative, the prologue delineates the themes of migration and cross-cultural encounters. It functions as a subtext that perpetually questions the authority of homogenizing discourses of cultural authenticity, staged in the main narrative of Lee's text. The prologue also introduces the notion of the gaze as a form of seeing that does not necessarily draw its object into a reductive field of vision and identity but simulates and mimics how the gaze seeks to enforce submission. In Chow's terminology the latter practice of the gaze constitutes ethnic "spectator[s]" as witnesses "to *representations* of 'their' history" (*Woman* 29). For example, Kerola frequently withdraws from and disrupts Gwei Chang's attempts at gazing at her by positing herself as the indifferent observer of what is meant to be her subjugation. Kelora's agency, however, consists in intervening into Gwei Chang's fetishizing and colonial fantasies of her as an untamed child of nature before those fantasies can be articulated as a binary metaphor of cultural Otherness.

The central event of the prologue, namely Kelora and Gwei Chang's encounter, sets the historical stage for both the genealogical project of Kae's narrative and the novel's discourse of cultural contamination:

> "Look, a chinaman!" She crept up behind him and spoke in his language. [.
> . .] "You mock me, yet you don't dare show yourself to me," he
> challenged, peering into a shimmering sea of leaves. "Come out now!" he
> barked with bravado. "Ah, so he speaks chinese," the voice observed. [. .
> .] "You speak chinese, " he said, indignant, unwilling to believe what he
> saw before him. "My father is a chinaman, like you. His eyes are slits like
> yours. He speaks like you." She spoke deliberately and demonstrated by

> pulling back the skin beside her dark, round eyes. [. . .] He stared like a crazy man, because he thought she would disappear if he didn't concentrate on her being. "But you're a wild injun." He spilled out the insults in front of her, but they were meaningless to her. [. . .] "My father tells me chinamen are always hungry." "I am not hungry," he shot back. [. . .] "Ahh, he has no manners," she exclaimed. He could only blink, astonished by this elegant rebuke from a "siwashee," a girl, younger than he. It made him feel uncivilized, uncouth; the very qualities he had assigned so thoughtlessly to her, he realized, she was watching for in him. (2-4)

Although the elements of surprise and the ironic bartering of stereotypes that punctuate Kelora's and Gwei Chang's initial dialogue have comic and startling effects, they also signify crucial moments of subject constitution within a colonial context. Kelora's Fanonian address, "Look! a chinaman," firmly locates the encounter within a colonial discourse of cultural representations. Gwei Chang is instantly interpellated into his ethnicity. In contrast to Fanon's observation of the racist effects of such an address, the lower case spelling of "chinaman" indicates that the interpellative effect does not reduce Gwei Chang to an "epidermal schema" (Fanon). Instead, it foregrounds an instant of surprise which is characteristic of colonial encounters and interrupts the linear flow of time and history.

Read in the context of colonialism, the conversation between Gwei Chang and Kelora also captures the crucial tactics of naming used in an unexpected encounter with both the unknown self and other. Butler succinctly argues that "one's social constitution" through naming "takes place without one's knowing [. . .] one may [. . .] meet that socially constituted self by surprise, with alarm or pleasure, even with shock" (*Excitable* 31). This observation applies specifically to colonial encounters which, according to such critics as Peter Hulme and Elleke Boehmer, are marked by a reversal and metaphorical appropriation of unfamiliarity and familiarity. Gwei Chang immediately processes the unfamiliar and unexpected appearance of a Chinese speaking native woman in familiar and stereotyping terms when he calls Kelora a "siwashee" girl. Yet, it is the moment of astonishment and disbelief that also lets him recognize himself through Kelora and his interpretation of her. He suddenly notices that he is as much the object of her gaze as she is of his, both waiting

in vain for an affirmation of their habitual modes of perception and classification. They become the ethnic spectators of their own internalized projections of cultural Otherness.

The theatrical staging of Kelora's ethnic interpellation signifies that the constitution of ethnic identity is a performative practice rather than a prescriptive or biological category. Kelora frequently employs her body to cite and ridicule colonial stereotypes of ethereal wilderness and innocence. For example, when Gwei Chang observes Kelora taking a bath, he notices that she uses her "nakedness" to play "with him for her own amusement" which not only made him "fear" her but also "wince with love" (9). While the hyperbolic and voyeuristic descriptions of Kelora's nakedness or "wildness of her soul" (134) evoke sexist and racist stereotypes, they can also be read as a performative reiteration of pastoral nature images common in colonial literature. In contrast to colonial narratives, Kae's narrative resists portraying natives as merely another natural feature of an unknown geography, illustrated by Kelora's refusal to be cast in stock images of colonial representations. Being aware that Gwei Chang observes her bathing in the river, "[s]he picked up a small snake and dropped it in front of her. It fell into the fleshiness of her thighs" (9). Kelora uses her body to cite the expulsion from paradise as a mocking, erotic temptation that confronts Gwei Chang with his own fetishizing fantasy of her exoticism. The prologue, then, introduces a narrative of cultural encounters punctuated by discontinuity and difference, and underscores that cultural homogeneity and originality are retrospectively, imagined. Kae's narrative traces the ways in which the prologue's heterogeneous identifications of gender and ethnicity are gradually effaced and recast as essentialist identities in the course of the violent relationship between Mui Lan and Fong Mei.

Both Mui Lan's and Fong Mei's patterns of identification are determined by oppressive cultural and social isolation caused by restrictive Canadian immigration policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and enforced Head Taxes. These policies caused an increasing closure of the Chinese-Canadian community at large. They led to decade-long

separations of families and regulated the communities and lives of women and children left behind in China. They also induced a division between Chinese- and white Canadians and within Chinese families once they were reunited on Canadian ground. As Mui Lan's and Fong Mei's relation exemplifies, hierarchical classifications of race, class, and gender already shaped the women's lives in China and were fortified and reproduced in the hermetically closed environment of the Chinese-Canadian community during the first decades of the 20th century. More precisely, Lee's novel negotiates those various social divisions as being implicated in a discursive practice that legitimizes cultural essentialism as a condition for ethnic survival. This survival ultimately depends on the domestication and control of the female body. In fact, the regulatory practices of cultural essentialism generate the ethnic female body.

As a paper-bride for Mui Lan's son Choy Fuk, Fong Mei is interpellated into a social and political position of ethnic exclusion and female subjugation prior to her arrival in Canada. Although Fong Mei gains social status through this marriage, her cultural displacement also effects her disembodiment. Her primary task is to be the legally purchased incubator of a male heir who will continue the patriarchal lineage of the Wong family.[68] Choy Fuk's physical and psychological impotence, however, prevents Fong Mei from conceiving a child even after five years of marriage. Not birthing a male child threatens the power and prestige of the Wong family, over whose financial and social well-being Mui Lan resides as a female patriarch. Separated from her community of women in the old homeland and longing for an idealized but long lost past, Mui Lan has assumed a position of self-appointed control over the Wong family to compensate for her isolation and emotional deprivation.

When Fong Mei "fails" to produce a son, Mui Lan violently condemns her as a "damned stinky she-bag" (58) who should "roll her useless female eggs" (59) back to China. In a devastating outburst of violent speech, Mui Lan subjugates Fong Mei to her own condition of silence and invisibility:

> Having no face left at all, having lost her standing as a human being, Fong Mei's colour drained away, her neck limp and weak as if broken. [. . .] Mui Lan's eyes fixed on her, black as hell, as if yearning to rub her off the face of this earth.
> Ha! Mui Lan thought to herself, looking over the results of her exertions, satisfied with the slumped remains of her daughter-in-law before her. That despicable pig-bitch wouldn't dare wrangle with her. [. . .] She might as well die! (58)

Mui Lan's violence ascribes Fong Mei the status of a passive victim on display. She has become the distorted and violated image of the disembodied and powerless woman. "[E]ncas[ed] in [. . .] disgust" and being "deaf, senseless" (Lee 188), Fong Mei's body appears, in Chow's words, as the "site of the aggressed [. . .] devastated, left bare, left behind by aggression" (*Writing* 29). However, if we read Mui Lan's act of violent naming or, rather, metaphorization of Fong Mei's body as an interpellation, Fong Mei's subjugation does not signify a complete loss of agency. Instead, it raises questions about the interpellator and the discursive condition of her language use.

Interpellation, if we recall Butler, always subjugates and produces a subject under constraint. For interpellation to be productive, the named person must recognize that the voice which calls and violently conveys a name and social position is itself subject to discursive structures of power. Mui Lan, then, does not name Fong Mei through a divine but through a historically positioned voice. Therefore, Fong Mei is not constituted by the name-caller alone but by an already established misogynist and conformist discourse of female and ethnic identity. She is both the product, the victim, and eventually the perpetrator of a "woman-hating world[]" (145). As an interpellator, Mui Lan, however, overlooks that she is also subject to and of language so that her attempt at subjugating Fong Mei "misses its mark" (Butler, *Excitable* 33). Indeed, Mui Lan's aggressive speech unwittingly assigns Fong Mei a social position from which to draw agency.

While Mui Lan's attack seeks to confine her daughter-in-law in complete obedience and to efface her body, it also exposes Mui Lan's own precarious position of power. Moreover, by excessively defiling Fong Mei's body, Mui Lan abuses this body as an

instrument of power. The intrinsic instability of Mui Lan's power surfaces when she contemplates the risk she took by destroying her daughter-in-law. In fact, Fong Mei could have "balk[ed] at her" (58) and "learnt very quickly to turn against the old ways when they didn't suit her anymore" (59). Mui Lan went "against the old ways when they didn't suit her" own desires by going against her husband Gwei Chang who opposes her plotting to get their son a mistress to produce a Wong heir. He asks her to open her eyes because they "are not in the village any more! Those old-fashioned ideas don't work here" (30). While Mui Lan anticipates that her power is in a state of decay, Fong Mei's reaction to Mui Lan's attack also foreshadows a change in rank. For Fong Mei "realised that there was rage as well [. . .] pushing her body beyond its limits! Rage that made her body shudder in icy fear" (60). Instead of suffering complete subjugation, Fong Mei's body and her unexpected rage resist complete annihilation. Her body translates the effects of constraint into the possibility of resistance within the laws of a patriarchal order.[69]

Mui Lan's desire for cultural authenticity quickly reveals itself to be an artifact generated by her nostalgic and idealized memories of China's "old ways" and induces a series of future incestuous relationships within the Wong family. Her intrigue to disempower Fong Mei and to engage her servant Song An as a surrogate mother for birthing the desired male Wong heir seeks to invent and control a sinicised order (i.e., an essentialist Chinese order) which will restore and secure her dominant social position and essentialist cultural identity. Based on a nativist and exclusionary articulation of cultural identities in terms of racial sameness and originality,[70] Mui Lan's intrigue is unwittingly complicit with policies of Canadian immigration laws, in particular with the segregational effects of the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act and the proposed Janet-Smith-Bill (1924). In Kae's words, Mui Lan's investment in cultural exclusion makes the Chinese community "ripe for incest" (147). Yet, Mui Lan's intrigue also instigates a confusion of actual and misconceived incestuous relationships. While Suzanne is the half-sister of her lover Morgan, Wong Ting An's son, Keeman is the biological son of Woo and not of Fong

Mei's husband, Choy Fuk, as both Mui Lan and Fong Mei assume. Being unable to control the effects of their own intrigues and desires, Mui Lan and Fong Mei presume that Beatrice and Keeman, rather than Suzanne and Morgan, entertain an incestuous relationship. Inadvertently, then, both women Mui Lan and Fong Mei fall prey to their own schemes, to the destructive effects of real and imagined incest.

As a metaphor, incest designates the perhaps most extreme polarization between cultural sameness and difference. Cultural sameness conceptually and practically endorses consanguine and endogamic relationships in order to ward off external threats against the survival of a cultural community. For example, in Pauline Melville's novel *The Ventriloquist's Tale*, the Macusi, one of Guyana's indigenous peoples, can opt neither for cultural seclusion nor for mixture because in both cases the outcome will be destruction. To breach the incest taboo leads to expulsion and cultural dispersal; not to breach it generates isolation and cultural petrification. If we understand cultural sameness as a governing configuration of incest, we can read Mui Lan's intrigue differently. Contrary to her intentions, Mui Lan's belief in and desire for cultural sameness based, as it is, on the "myth of consanguinity" (Chow, *Writing* 24) advocates rather than prohibits incest. In this context, it reflects a politicized form of ethnic party discipline not uncommon, as Chow explains, in the history of "Chinese communities overseas" (23).

For example, Chow argues that during the student demonstration in Beijing in May 1989 many Hong Kong and other overseas Chinese communities demonstrated their solidarity by promoting their newly discovered "sense of [. . .] 'Chineseness'" (23) through "slogans such as "Blood is Thicker than Water" (24). In the absence of "the possibility of ever living in China," they claimed "ethnic oneness - sinicization" (24) and "'an unadulterated Chinese culture'" (Yen-ho Wu qtd. in Chow 24). The *fata morgana* of uncontaminated cultural origins, however, forces all members of the community into an *"absolute submission"* because the myth of consanguinity *"is empty"* (Chow, *Writing* 24). In other words, cultural sameness and consanguinity are legitimated through a

performative practice: Their normative effects depend on the constant referral and reiteration of their authoritative grounds to an imagined tradition and native homeland. Mui Lan's advocacy of cultural sameness and, by extension, incest, precisely draws from those normative practices of cultural self-consolidation.

Through the incestuous relationship between Suzanne and Morgan, Lee's novel illustrates how the promotion of cultural consanguinity hinges on the regulation of the female body while producing an abject and, thus, disruptive margin within the Chinese-Canadian community. It is important to note, however, that Morgan's and Suzanne's sexual relationship is based on mutual consent rather than on incestuous violence and therefore allows us to read the metaphor of incest in its symbolic significations. As anthropologists and critics such as Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva have discussed at length, the regulatory effects of the incest taboo are engendered by establishing a social and ritual space of physical defilement and contamination which defines what is proper, stable, sacred, and clean. Suzanne's and Morgan's relationship represents such a boundary not merely because of its incestuous inflections but also because of Morgan's culturally mixed and therefore contaminated lineage. Further, their relationship may also expose Fong Mei's adulterous relationship with Ting An.

Marked by cultural defilement and located neither within nor outside the white or Chinese community, Suzanne's and Morgan's relationship threatens to collapse and destroy the imaginary order of stable and consanguine identities. The destruction of the symbolic order of sameness is eventually achieved through Suzanne's death. Symbolizing an unspeakable and excluded Otherness, Suzanne's anorexic body and final suicide enacts the paradox of incest. Both cultural sameness and difference eventually turn out to be destructive. In this sense, it seems seductive to read Suzanne's body as a metaphor. To a certain extent, such a reading would be appropriate. Yet, it also seems possible to argue that the dramatic staging of Suzanne's body and death reinterprets the operative modes of metaphor: Suzanne's suicide symbolically names the violence that connects the

irreconcilable terms of cultural sameness and difference inscribed in the exclusionary order of incest. Instead of providing a dialectical synthesis of the contradictions residing in both terms, Suzanne's body enacts the impossibility of such a sublation and refuses to give birth to a new order of cultural hybridity. The incest metaphor, then, organizes Kae's narrative in that it dramatises the contradictions through which, in particular, Mui Lan and Fong Mei make their claims to cultural sameness.

By constructing "Chineseness" as a totalising signifier of cultural sameness, Mui Lan not only reinforces rigid cultural and class differences within the community, but simultaneously effects a certain permeability of those ethnic, sexual, and familial boundaries she seeks to control. For example, her feudal ideas of marriage arrangements are not common in the whole of China. Song An, the chosen mistress for Choy Fuk, comes from a family which never sold their daughters into marriage. Mui Lan can only take advantage of her because she is her servant and morally indebted to Mui Lan. Thus, the success of Mui Lan's scheme depends on reinventing a tradition that never existed in the first place but is facilitated by living in Canada. By manipulating class divisions between women, Mui Lan ultimately insures the reproduction of female confinement within a patriarchal order. Furthermore, she controls her environment primarily through verbal attacks. The archaic and at once artificial language she employs perpetuates her installed order of cultural exclusion. In fact, her and Fong Mei's description of Canada as the "backwash bush" (30) where they have to live "on the frontiers with barbarians" (61) with white "devil" Canadians employs a "reverse-discourse" of racist representations of Otherness which, in contrast to Kelora's tactics, "uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms" (Butler *Gender* 13).

Of "female-bag[s]" and "(trans)parent[s]" - Performing the Body in Language: Naming, Relexification, and Translation

Although Mui Lan anticipates the decay of her power when she defies her husband's advice, it is in fact Kae who mediates the erosion of cultural purity through the literal translations of Mui Lan's "peasant [. . .] [and] rustic language" (63). We must assume that words and phrases such as "go die" or "stinky she-bag" are translations of translations, for Kae's knowledge of Chinese is restricted and she needs Hermia's "advanced Chinese" to "decipher the letters" (41) of her grandmother. Moreover, Kae uses her translations as self-conscious and ironic quotations when she comments on the lives of her foremothers. Macaroni fragments in ethnic texts, to recall Lorrigio's and Spivak's argument, often work as textual reminders of the untranslatability of either the immigrant or postcolonial experience. Indeed, Lee's text at once employs alienating and essentialising effects of macaroni structures without, however, adhering to their usual bilingual form. Instead, as Rita Wong observes, Kae's translations "serve to root the story, give it a distinctly chinese grounding. [. . .] Sometimes a clumsy clash [. . .], the chinese and english enact a side-step, shuffle, hop and dance" (143). While I generally agree with Wong, I also believe that the authenticising thrust in Kae's translation is strategically embedded in the performative structure of her narrative. Read as translations, the Chinese phrases in Lee's novel serve to undermine the essentilalist identity they seem to proclaim. Linguistically, Kae favors a combination of decolonizing and ethnic writing strategies by using what Chantal Zabus calls techniques of "relexification" (104) in the service of cross-cultural translations.

In contrast to Zabus' analysis of relexification in proverbial writing techniques in West African novels, Lee's use of relexification is largely related to acts of naming and injurious speech. Lexical metaphors, or the one-word metaphor, form the basis of Lee's cross-cultural translations. Cursing names such as "ancient she-dog" (62), "dirty she-bag" (77), "dead boy-bitch" (79) effect an indiginization of the English language as they seem to

keep within the structures and rhythms of Mui Lan's Chinese peasant dialect.[71] In *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, however, relexification can not be strictly defined in Zabus' terms as "the making of a new register of communication out of an alien lexicon" (102) because for Kae, the writer, Chinese is more unfamiliar and "alien" than English. We may therefore assume that relexification in Kae's narrative does not authorize a hidden "ethno-text" (Zabus 136) with authenticating linguistic "calques" (Zabus 110) of an original source language. Instead, Kae's translations visualize the fragmentary structure of a presumed original by using hyphenated and grammatically unconventional compound nouns for her translations. While Kae's relexifications displace the autonomy of English and generate, in Zabus' words, "an unfamiliar European language that constantly suggests another tongue" (103), they do not, as Zabus suggests, "ground[] the character [narrative] in a specific ethnicity" (107). Rather, Kae's relexifications put this specifically designated ethnicity under erasure by emphasising some of the narrative effects and techniques of relexification Zabus mentions but does not discuss further, namely "'transparence,' [. . .] 'translation' (even 'psychic'), 'transliteration,' 'transference'" (104).

Having no direct access to the past or the "rustic language" (63) of her foremothers, Kae endorses that the absence of original speech and cultural belonging makes translation as a direct transmission from source to target language impossible. In fact, the various stories of the past that comprise a large amount of Kae's narrative are mediated by Seto Chi, who, as Kae's nanny, is metaphorically called a "(trans)parent" (127). Read as an adjective, "(trans)parent" suggests that Seto Chi's role as a witness to the Wong family history clarifies the reasons of the violence exercised on and among the various generations of Wong women. As Kae's "intractable reference point for power" (127), Seto Chi dismantles the complicities of the Wong women as brokers of patriarchal power hidden in the "unspoken chinese edict [. . .] of silence and invisibility" (180). Being the reader of Kae's narrative, Seto Chi refuses to be spoken for. Instead, she destabilizes Kae's authority as a writer and trustee of ethnic knowledge by mocking Kae's desire to tell a tale

of "guilt" (131), "[i]dentity crisis" (191), and ruthless female victimization. Located outside the consanguine "ranks" (134) of family lineage and cultural filiation, Seto Chi contests the notion of stable and biologically defined female and cultural identities. Coming from Malaya and having "learned her chineseness from [Kae's] mother," she provokes and confuses Kae. While "all [Kae] ever wanted was authenticity," Chi invariably makes her see "double" (128). This doubleness of vision allows for processes of cultural translation that make the artificial homogeneity of invented cultural boundaries and traditions transparent.

Apart from employing relexified nouns, Kae's narrative translations take metaphor into the service of cultural difference. Read as a noun, "(trans)parent" denotes Seto Chi's position as a surrogate mother. If we understand both the surrogate and metaphor as something that works through substitutions, it is possible to argue that Seto Chi functions as a metaphor for cultural hybridity. The substitutional configuration of metaphor entailed in such a reading of Seto Chi, however, undermines the metaphor's claim to hybridity. Instead, I suggest that Seto Chi is more than a nanny and less than a biological mother. She represents Bhabha's "proxy" (*Location* 154) or, in this case, "'a minus in the origin'" (155) of the Wong family's dominant narrative of cultural homogeneity and consanguine identity patterns. Bhabha, as I discussed in chapter three, assigns the effects of the proxy to the performative practice of cultural minorities to intervene into the pedagogical or hegemonic narrative of the nation. In Bhabha's theory, this performative practice is primarily an act of metonymic displacements. Bhabha's dominant rendition of cultural difference, however, cannot account for Seto Chi's narrative function of being at once a proxy and a metaphor.

In Lee's novel, the metaphor of the "(trans)parent" operates performatively not because of its metonymic movements, but because it cites and translates the meaning of "transparent," namely of seeing through a disguise (OED) or an identity stated as being original, into a different thematic and grammatical register. More specifically, as a nominal

"(trans)parent" and thus surrogate mother, Seto Chi enables Kae to see through the "two-faced masks" the "people around [Kae] wore" (Lee 128) and thus reconfigures the normative values of family lineage and cultural belonging. In contrast to Bhabha's theoretical neglect of the one-word metaphor as a site for cultural translations, such critics as Benjamin and Chow foreground the profound role nouns play in various translation practices. Benjamin argues that a translation becomes "transparent" through "a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator" (79). To Benjamin, the word functions as an "arcade" (79) through which light metaphorically shines on an original and changes it in the course of translation. Chow subsequently applies Benjamin's notion of the arcade to cultural translations. To her, as it did, originally, to Benjamin, the arcade designates a passageway similar to those found in shopping malls, suggesting the commodification and contamination of cultural originality through the representational technologies of mass cultures. Designating both a linguistic and commercial passageway, the one-word metaphor, in Chow's words, provides "the condition of possibility for transmission" (*Primitive* 199). Thus, as a metaphor, the bracketed noun "(trans)parent" counters the petrification of cultural traditions as they are expressed in Mui Lan's violent desire for blood lineage and authenticity. It suggests both a "weakening of tradition" (Chow, *Primitive* 199) and a process of cultural translation that changes the meaning of the terms it translates. From this point of view, Kae's use of metaphor participates in a performative rather than pedagogical rhetoric of the nation. It emphasizes cultural difference as a metaphorical practice of translation that generates "unanticipated transformation[s]" and meanings (Butler, "Careful" 131).

Kae's narrative practices of transliteralizing names, metaphors, and curses also requires us to think through translation as a performative narrative strategy that enacts what it names. Mui Lan's and the old men's curses primarily execute acts of violence against those who do not conform to the culturally essentializing rules generated by both "the seething hysteria" of the white Canadian community and Chinatown's "self-contained

community of men" (68). But Kae's translated rendering of those curses illustrates the violence and weakening of their normative effects. Her translations show that all forms of cultural translation engage in "a process of *putting together*," as Chow explains, which "demonstrates that the 'original,' too, is something that has been put together" (*Primitive* 185). As I have discussed above, Mui Lan's pretensions of and aspirations to cultural authenticity are frequently countered by her nostalgia, her own displacement through migration, as well as by the larger discourse of Chinese-Canadian history. The violence of naming Fong Mei, for instance, is a prerequisite of her "mercenary intrigue" (Lee 132) and the erosion of an imagined essentialist ethnic order that makes that intrigue possible. By providing the reader with a literal translation of Mui Lan's language use, Kae employs translation as "a process of 'literalness' that displays the way the 'original' itself was put together -- that is, in its violence" (Chow, *Primitive* 185). The literal configurations of her compound nouns combine pronouns and nouns, pointing towards an asymmetric grammatical structure, and dissolve the established referentiality or properties, in Derridean terms, of names and metaphors. Ironically speaking, "female-bag," then, cannot be read exclusively as womb, 'cunt,' or carrier bag. Rather than dividing the metaphorics of such a name into tenor and vehicle, the referent of "female-bag" designates the process of cultural translation itself by transliteralising the identity-conveying effects of an injurious into a performative or catachrestic name. In the context of Lee's novel, such violent transliteralizations signify a strategic act of textual violence in the service of cultural contamination.

Interestingly enough, Kae's translations largely draw from or refer to bodily images. This reference emphasizes the physical signature of cultural translations and corresponds to the crucial narrative functions Kae assigns to the body in her female genealogy. Benjamin argues that what remains untranslatable in a translation is nevertheless something that is symbolized and "seeks to represent" in "the evolving of the languages themselves." Benjamin calls the latent meanings stored in language "an active force in life"

(79). To Chow this "'active force of [sic] life' refers to the cultural violence that is made evident or apparent by the act of translation" (*Primitive* 198). Discussing film as a medium of cultural translation, Chow is correct to argue that translations facilitate a re-reading process of cultural and imperial violence. She explains that "[f]or anyone whose identity is sutured with this culture [imperial], filmic representation [. . .] makes it possible to see (with discomfort) one's 'native origins' as foreign bodies" (*Primitive* 198-99). Similar effects can be achieved when we situate her theory within a different medium of translation, namely the written word. The "active life force in language" not only refers to the stifling effects of cultural violence, but also to the originary violence of metaphor which facilitates agency through language. As Butler puts it, it is "*a figural* substitution [that] makes the thinking of the agency of language possible. Because this very formulation [of language *as* agency] is offered *in* language, the agency of language is not only the theme of the formulation, but its very action" (*Excitable* 7). Thus, an act of transference, particularly on the one-word level privileged by Benjamin, articulates language itself to be a configuration of agency.

Agency, however, does not necessarily consist of a conscious act but is determined by its discursive formations. More precisely, what is symbolized in a text and yet exceeds the boundaries of form and content of a translated text, namely that which cannot be communicated in Benjamin's sense, are both the discursive conditions and somatic dimensions of language. The loss of referentiality in Kae's literal translations, then, foregrounds both of these aspects. A name such as "female-bag" situates Fong Mei in an already existing discourse of misogyny and ethnocentrism. Simultaneously, "female-bag" names and turns the female body into a narrative site of violation and erasure. The name constitutes Fong Mei as a subject in subjection through a discourse that preceded and followed the act of her subject constitution. This discontinuity between "the time of discourse" and "the time of the subject" (Butler, *Excitable* 31) introduces a temporal gap in

the act of naming and translation which contests both referentiality and essentialist cultural identities. Producing a rupture between the time of discourse and the subject, Kae's translated names allow for an understanding of subject formation processes through the traumatic yet empowering operations of interpellation.

In conclusion, the "active life force in language" strives to articulate the excess intrinsically produced by language. In Lee's novel, Kae's translations of semantic excess make the painful and traumatic effects of female subjugation and invisibility legible. At the same time, they insist on the discursive production and historicity of names and subjectivity. In this context, Kae's translations participate in a performative practice that cites and resignifies metaphors. Such metaphors as the family tree and the "(trans)parent" enable us to read cultural difference as a metaphorical and performative act of cultural translation. If these metaphors conventionally refer to normative concepts of cultural authenticity and consanguinity, in Kae's narrative they question the authority of such concepts and foreground identity formation processes based on cultural and genealogical contamination. Further, Kae's translational practices enable both the reader and the person who is interpellated through injurious speech acts to look at herself from a distance and see herself as an alien, detached body. For example, being the object of and witness to her own degradation, Fong Mei, again, realizes that her body can be both the object and agent of aggression. Registering rage and trembling with the anticipation of mutiny in response to a violent address, Fong Mei's body is produced in language and becomes "the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said" (Butler, *Excitable* 11). Like Dabydeen's novel, Lee's negotiates different languages of cultural resistance. Both texts dramatize suicide as the most radical and ambiguous act of physical withdrawal from normative identity formation processes. Yet, while the metaphor of death in *The Intended* suggests that Joseph's suicide performs an act of subaltern self-representation, Suzanne's suicide, as I have discussed earlier, enacts an irresolvable paradox which questions an optimistic theoretical articulation of the female

body as site of agency and alternative knowledge production.

Part III

Performing the Nation

> 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.

Derek Walcott, "*The Schooner* Flight." (346)

More an Achilleus or an "Ancient Mariner" than a Homeric Odysseus, Walcott's Shabine, the swearing sailor of the Caribbean archipelago, crosses the seas of history, memory, and poetry to give "voice" to his own and his "people's grief" (360). He celebrates and condemns the ambiguous legacy of the English language the colonizing and conquering "bastards have left" (350) to the Caribbean after the fading of Empire. Both Austin Clarke and Derek Walcott belong to the older generation of Caribbean writers whose works are strongly influenced by the experience of British colonialism and its aftermath. Concerned with the experience of exile, historical displacement, the formation of national and individual identities, the recent texts of both writers have as their starting point a critical consideration of their Caribbean background. From different perspectives, their works explore the formation of national and cross-cultural identities through generically mixed modes of writing.

While Clarke's novel *The Origin of Waves* and Derek Walcott's long poem *Omeros* do not share many similarities on the level of plot, they employ similar rhetorical strategies based on a versatile use of metaphor. Both texts experiment with performative configurations of metaphor insofar as metaphors occur through repetitions, misquotations, catachreses, and mistranslations. They enable us to rethink the conventional uses of metaphor and the trope's critical evaluation in the light of postcolonial writing. Marked by self-referentiality, these texts also undertake various inquiries into the function of metaphor

in identity formation, and thus invite the reader to examine the effects of performative uses of metaphor in postcolonial texts. Apart from using similar metaphors of the sea and waves, *Omeros* and *The Origin of Waves* intersect through their melancholic quest for a culturally cohesive identity. In each of these texts, this quest is facilitated by a female character, Helen and Lang respectively, whose narrative function and metaphorical status either consolidate or subvert the discourse of nation formation projected by the male narrators of both texts. A performative reading of these women's roles facilitates a critical examination of the ways in which Walcott's and Clarke's texts construct their different narratives of the Caribbean nation and Canadian multiculturalism respectively. While Walcott's discussion of Caribbean nationality departs from the overpowering presence of Helen, Clarke's narrative evolves around the loss and absence of Lang. Although neither text dissolves the metaphorical status of its female characters, Clarke's novel attempts to reject an appropriation of woman as a symbolic representation of the nation.

Set in Toronto, Austin Clarke's novel casts a melancholic look back into the Caribbean as it negotiates retrospectively the migration experiences of two Barbadian men in Canada and the USA. Clarke's novel departs from and evolves around the reading of such metaphors as the conch-shell and the inner tube which negotiate the various contradictions of national belonging. The novel's multiple repetitions of these metaphors as well as the frequent use of catachresis suggest that Clarke's novel operates performatively. In this context, a performative reading of the organizing metaphors in Clarke's text gives rise to a critical consideration of the theoretical assessment of metaphor in ethnic Canadian literary criticism. The rhetorical configurations of *The Origin of Waves* challenge rigid definitions of nationhood and such overused theoretical terms as cultural hybridity and indecision through a critique of both immigrant melancholia and a state-prescribed multiculturalism. Clarke, as I will argue, develops his critical narrative of multiculturalism through a recourse to his unpublished novel manuscript *An American Dutchman*. To read *The Origin of Waves* through Clarke's manuscript helps us exploring the ways in which

Clarke employs generic conventions to articulate a personal and cross-cultural narrative of the Canadian nation. Further, the novel is concerned with processes of cultural translation that seek to weaken rather than to strengthen those notions of ethnicity that idealize the migrant's past and formulate cultural traditions as an unchangeable certainty rather than a flexible condition of identification.

In contrast to Clarke's novel, Walcott's long poem invests in a notion of cultural identity based on circularity. More specifically, while in *Omeros* each journey "returns to the port from which it must start" (291), such a return from exile becomes an unfulfilled and frustrated desire in *The Origin of Waves*. But we should not necessarily read the circularity of Walcott's poem as a form of national essentialism or as a desire for cohesive and fully knowledgeable subjectivities. Instead, it seems crucial to consider the historical specificities out of which Walcott writes. As a long poem, *Omeros* invites us to read Caribbean nation and identity formation discursively through the hybrid, discontinuous, and intersecting production of Caribbean historiography, culture, and language. Rhetorically, Walcott's long poem narrates Caribbean history through a number of metaphors, names, and catachreses, indicating a performative dramatization of such issues as cultural originality and national belonging. However, Walcott's use of rhetorical tropes primarily derives from his concept of Caribbean history as perpetual acts of mimicry. We need to examine the ways in which metaphors reinforce and contest homogenizing narratives of the Caribbean nation in *Omeros*. Further, Walcott's long poem articulates Caribbean history in terms of fragmentation, communality, and cultural translation and thus engages in narrative practices of the postcolonial nation. To "return[] to the port from which [one] must start," I argue, employs the idea of modern circular time while reading it through the Caribbean experience of modernity, namely, of colonialism, slavery, and exile. The performative aspects of *Omeros* reside in the poem's various dramatizations of Caribbean history as a history of heterogeneous origins engendered through mimicry.

If Walcott locates Caribbean subjectivity and national belonging in the gap between the idea of an absent Caribbean history and mimicry, then metaphor mediates the narrative space between cultural conflict and agency. When read through a performative perspective, Walcott's use of metaphor frequently harmonizes contradictions without fully negating them. However, if metaphor has been historically used as a powerful trope to impose a cohesive national identity, we must ask whether *Omeros* and *The Origin of Waves* employ metaphor to endorse or to challenge homogenizing modes of nation narration. For example, does the epic generic configuration of *Omeros* imply, in Bhabha's terms, a pedagogical understanding of the nation so that metaphor cannot escape its synthesizing effects? How, then, does a performative understanding of metaphor generate different readings of cross-cultural identity and nation formation in each of these texts? A performative reading of the organizing metaphors in *Omeros*, I suggest, reveals a number of conciliatory closures Walcott's text confers to its main male characters while reproducing a feminized rhetoric of Caribbean art and the nation.

By analyzing the generic configurations of Walcott's and Clarke's texts, we will contextualize the different historical and literary legacies through and against which each of these texts develops its vision of national belonging. For the purpose of this study, a discussion of genre is important for two reasons. First, it enables a genealogical consideration of some metaphors *The Origin of Waves* and *Omeros* employ and cite from Walcott's and Clarke's earlier texts. Second, it helps us investigate the ways in which *Omeros* and *The Origin of Waves* conceptualize contemporary notions of the nation. This is not to say that either of these texts should be assigned the task of being a postcolonial and messianic representative of new nation formation processes in the aftermath of failed Western concepts of the nation. Yet, both of these texts have won international acclaim, contributing to the increasingly central status of postcolonial texts. While the critical celebration of postcolonial texts suggests a greater acceptance of formerly marginalized texts among diverse groups of readers, it also cautions us not to be lured into believing that

postcolonial demands for more inclusive and democratic forms of nationhood have been fulfilled. In this context, I approach *Omeros* as a Nobel Prize-winning and canonized text that should not be read as the final word on postcolonial concerns of cross-cultural and cross-national identity formation processes. Instead, its ideological investments and legacies must be carefully examined in order to avoid a closure of postcolonial debates. A critical exploration of the generic configurations of *Omeros* and *The Origin of Waves* illustrates the different political agendas underlying each of these texts.

Chapter 7

Walcott's *Omeros* : Caribbean Historiography, Naming, and the Construction of Gender

Walcott and the Caribbean Epic

Walcott's long poem orchestrates its ambiguities through its three different yet intersecting narrative lines. Although each of these lines consists of various subplots, thus making a summary of *Omeros* almost impossible, I will attempt here to account for the three main plot lines in order to situate my discussion of the text.

First, set on the contemporary Caribbean island of St. Lucia, Walcott's home, *Omeros* tells the story of two befriended fishermen, Achille and Hector, who try to survive in an environment that is increasingly corrupted and dominated by tourism. They become, however, foes when they fight about the island's black beauty Helen. While Achille initially loses Helen to Hector, his loss enables him to go on a spiritual return journey to Africa which eventually gives him a sense of Caribbean belonging. Hector, in contrast, alienates himself further from his cultural roots, the Caribbean sea, when he exchanges his fishing boat for a tourist van which finally leads him to his death in a car accident. In this section of the poem Caribbean identity and history are negotiated primarily through themes of affliction and healing.

The second plot line deals with the retired British Major Dennis Plunkett and his Irish wife Maud. To a certain extent, both represent the former colonial masters who live in permanent exile and still search for their own space of cultural and individual belonging. Plunkett's quest for both a son and an unequivocal identity is dramatized in his attempt to write Helen's history through the techniques of empiricist and imperial historiography. Maud's "writing" of history, on the other side, takes a feminized artistic turn. She produces a tapestry of Caribbean nature, in particular of Caribbean birds. While Plunkett's character resembles an aging and still wandering Odysseus, Maud's character reverberates with the

multiple literary traits of Homer's Penelope, Shakespeare's Miranda, and Jean Rhys's Antoinette.

The third plot line tells the story of the poem's "phantom narrator" (28) who, in various ways, is referred to as Derek Walcott, the poet in search of the shadow of his own poetic and historical voice. "When," he asks melancholically, "would I enter that light beyond metaphor?" (271). Although the phantom narrator concedes that "every 'I' is a fiction finally" (28), his narrative does not seem to conform to the subjective and restricted perspective of a conventional first-person narrative. Instead, he is omniscient yet self-reflective. From his position of a wandering but finally returned Caribbean writer, he envisions his "reversible world" (207) of a Caribbean epic of survival and relation. In the final two books of *Omeros*, resembling Dante's *Inferno* and the cathartic denouement of a Greek tragedy, the narrator encounters Seven Seas, the blind Caribbean seer and sage, and Omeros, the animated sea-bleached bust of Homer. As a result of this encounter, the narrator must relinquish his desire to write a history that locates the Caribbean in an irrevocable history of slavery, guilt, envy, and nostalgia. All three plot lines intersect through their intertextual relationship with both of Homer's epics *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*.

At the end of his narrative, the phantom narrator of *Omeros* accepts that "the mirror of History / has melted and, beneath it, a patient, hybrid organism / grows in his cruciform shadow" (297). The narrator's vision of history indicates some of the ways in which Walcott conceives of his Caribbean epic. In Walcott's vocabulary, the "hybrid organism" of Caribbean identity emerges from multiple narratives of history rather than from a single, authoritative "History" of colonial conquest written in the West. For example, in addition to its Christian connotations, the metaphor of the "cruciform shadow" refers to a specifically Walcottian metaphorology of cultural hybridity. More specifically, with its vertical and horizontal axis, the image of the cross refers to the intersection between the meridian, indicating the division between America and Europe, and the equator, Walcott's symbol of

merging cultural horizons and hyphenated identities. At the same time, the cross symbolizes the transatlantic crossing of the slaves and their survival, a survival that accounts for "the epic splendour" of Caribbean history (Walcott 1990, 149). As with many other metaphors in *Omeros*, the cross suggests a vision of history through which colonial partitions of the world and the Atlantic crossing of Africans through the Middle Passage produce multiple cultural origins. Walcott's notion of the Caribbean epic, then, is rhetorically linked to the use of specific metaphors and thematizes a history of Caribbean survival rather than of colonial obliteration.

To different degrees, such eminent Walcott scholars as Rei Terada and Robert Hamner argue that *Omeros* "offers [. . .] a re-writing of tradition" (Hamner, "Introduction" 11), in particular that of the Homeric epic. They observe that Walcott makes use of a range of classical Homeric conventions, but also transposes his narrative from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean sea and employs socially low standing characters rather than elevated heroes. According to Hamner, Walcott's rewriting of Homeric traditions resides not so much in the change of geography and character conventions than in the poem's "outstanding feature of [. . .] reflexive consciousness, [. . .] the intertextuality of autobiography and fiction, [and its] postmodern recognition of words and margins as poetic content" (11).[72] In a more recent publication Hamner calls *Omeros* a Caribbean "'epic of the dispossessed'" which "qualifies as a 'foundation' epic, one that inscribes a people's rightful name and place within their own narrative" (*Epic* 3). Although Hamner is right to read *Omeros* as a form of epic that emerges from and celebrates the particular history of the Caribbean, he problematizes neither the modernist legacies of Walcott's epic nor the cultural and gender differences the notion of a "'foundation' epic" risks to erase. In contrast to Hamner, Terada does not read *Omeros* in terms of Caribbean dispossession or a founding cultural and national originality. Instead, along with Walcott's critical work, Terada emphasizes that the epic features of *Omeros* comprise an aspect of Walcott's

"archeological view of history" (65-66), of his use of myth and mimicry as sites of literary production and Caribbean identity that contest any form of cultural originality. Hamner and Terada, however, neither specify from what tradition of the epic *Omeros* borrows nor discuss whether or not it reproduces the holistic and organic forms of nation narration attributed to the classical epic.

Mikhail Bakhtin discusses the classical epic as a genre completed in itself that dramatizes national traditions by positing the past as an absolute and static entity with no connections to the present. In this strict definition, *Omeros* does not belong to the epic genre. Indeed, *Omeros* radically opposes itself to Bakhtin's notion that the "epic world is constructed in the zone of an absolute distanced image, beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing, incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating the present" (17). However, *Omeros* is written in the past continuous tense and asks for a provisional closure of history in order to live the present. Moreover, *Omeros* conforms to the Bakthinean reading of the epic inasmuch as it narrates an overwhelmingly male story of families and fathers. Even though the presentation of families may not adhere to conventional Western patterns of the nuclear family, the resolution of *Omeros* through Helen's pregnancy symbolically provides a new beginning for Caribbean national identity. To the extent that all genres are novelized, polyglossic, and artificial, *Omeros* participates in a modified version of the epic. More specifically, *Omeros* does not work out of a national heroic past, but it invents national traditions without claiming a founding, essential history. For this reason, I do not believe that *Omeros* invests in the classical configurations of the epic. Instead, it appeals to the generically hybrid forms of the long poem while largely adopting the major characteristics of the modern verse epic. It is important to distinguish between these two traditions in order to show the ways in which *Omeros* develops its own politics of nation narration.

In her study of the Canadian long poem, *On the Edge of Genre* (1991), Kamboureli defines the long poem "as a 'new' genre" that "resist[s] generic definition" (xiv) and "question[s] its legacies of epic, lyric, and narrative forms" (204). Philoctete, one of the St. Lucian fishermen, appears to undermine the epic narrative frame of *Omeros*. Similar to his classical predecessor, Philoctete suffers from a festering ankle wound, the physical mark of colonial history in general and slavery in particular. In the course of the poem, Philoctete is cured from his wound through a ritual act of purification performed by Ma Kilman. The retrospective narrative of *Omeros* introduces Philoctete in his healed condition. "For some extra silver" (4), Philoctete offers tourists his "scar made by a rusted anchor" (4) for "a snapshot " that captures "his shin" (311) and thus the "photogenic poverty" (311) of the island and its inhabitants. Yet, Philoctete does not tell them the story of his wound and its healing. If the Homeric Philoctete symbolizes, in Edmund Wilson's words, "a man obsessed by a grievance [. . .] he is [. . .] kept from forgetting by an agonizing physical ailment" (278), Walcott's Philoctete mocks this convention. Instead, refusing to remain the victim of history, Philoctete ironically flaunts his scar to exploit the tourists' vision of the Caribbean as an exotic "Third World" paradise of picturesque decay. In these scenes, *Omeros* quotes and simultaneously questions the legacies of the epic as one element of its generic configurations. Through Philoctete's character, *Omeros* also warns its readers not to romanticize its tale either as a story of anti-colonial resistance or as a postcolonial act to salvage the epic as a revered Western literary form. Rather, by mocking epic conventions, which in itself refers to yet another tradition of the epic, Philoctete reminds us of the political and cultural investments we bring to the text as readers.

The self-reflexive thematization of epic writing embodied by Philoctete, however, does not fully justify a reading of *Omeros* as a long poem. In order to argue that Walcott's *Omeros* is more akin to the modernist than to the contemporary Canadian long poem, it is

helpful to quote Kamboureli at length. She argues that the long poem is a genre of the "present tense" and "reside[s] on the edge of things, within the limits of genre, between the reflexivity of its language and the referentiality of its ideology" (*Edge* xiv). "[T]he long poem," she writes, "offers us a 'long view' of the past it never inhabited and of the future it will never reach. This 'view' [. . .] endows it with the ability to deconstruct the normative values of the themes and forms that comprise it" (204). In this sense, the long poem, as I understand Kamboureli, provides a genre that changes the terms of foundationalist narratives of identity and the nation by thematizing and questioning these terms in its own production. Further, by "avoid[ing] reconciliation [and] shun[ning] synthesis," the long poem operates through "a negative dialectics, an unfinished process of binary constructs" (204). This process insists on the historical contradictions the poem dramatizes and does not dispense with "one master narrative in order to create another. Rather, it [. . .] intrudes upon [. . .] the very generic and cultural fissures it observes between the epic and the lyric, between its colonial predecessors and postcolonial instances, between referentiality and self-reflexivity" (Kamboureli, *Edge* 204).

Insofar as Walcott's *Omeros* neither strives for "a synthesis nor separation" of historical conflicts but "incorporates difference within itself" (Terada 9), we could argue that *Omeros* displays characteristic features of the contemporary long poem. However, I suggest that *Omeros* develops the notion of cultural hybridity into both a homogenizing metaphor of Caribbean identity and a new master narrative for the Caribbean nation grounded in a modernist desire for originality. *Omeros*'s phantom narrator tells us that the symbolic language of his narrative derives from the Caribbean landscape, with its two oceans and mountains, that produces an "epic where every line was erased / yet freshly written in sheets of exploding surf" (296). The narrator's presentation of the epic is ambiguous for a number of reasons. To begin with, his notion of the epic is reminiscent of a modernist desire for new and original historical beginnings. His emphasis on newness,

inscribed in the metaphor of the fresh "sheets of exploding surf," indicates that *Omeros*, despite its self-referential tone, rarely thematizes the modernist literary and ideological legacies out of which it emerges. Further, the poem's emphasis on a national Caribbean identity as a "hybrid organism" (297) posits cultural hybridity as a dominant narrative that replaces the older master narrative of the "[melted] mirror of History" (297), regardless of gender or class differences that refract concepts of cultural hybridity. Yet, by presenting the epic as an act of erasure of previously written "lines" or epic tales, the narrator also suggests a deconstructivist understanding of both the epic and the Caribbean nation. The poem, then, would seem to reject a conceptualization of the epic and the nation on grounds of a founding originality to underscore Walcott's artistic commitment to the narrative strategies of mimicry. Yet, if we consider that Caribbean identity concepts are founded on the experience of cultural fragmentation, dispersal, and contamination, we can argue that the search for cultural unity through an acceptance of cultural diversity comprises an original and founding notion of Caribbean identity. In other words, a Caribbean epic that takes cultural hybridity as its master narrative does not necessarily contest received constructs of Caribbean nationhood and identity. In this context, Walcott's *Omeros* echoes the conventions of the modern epic rather than those of the contemporary long poem as Kamboureli defines them.

How, then, does Walcott envision a specifically Caribbean form of epic narrative; how does this form narrate the nation? To begin with, I think it is safe to assume that *Omeros* is written in the tradition of the modern verse epic as Michael André Bernstein discusses it in his pivotal study *The Tale of the Tribe. Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic*. Bernstein defines the epic as "a narrative of its audience's own cultural, historical, or mythic heritage" with a narrative voice that does "not bear the trace of a single sensibility." The epic's political, didactic, and social agenda consists in its address of its audience as "citizens" rather than individuals. The epic, Bernstein argues, "speaks primarily to members of a 'tribe,' [. . .] who recognize in the poem, social [. . .] as well as

psychological, ethical, emotional, or aesthetic imperatives" (14).[73] In Poundean fashion, the epic concerns itself with history and, similar to its classical ancestor, tells, in Kipling's phrase, "the tale of the tribe" (qtd. in Bernstein 8) through a community's oral and written legacies of stories, myths, and legends. Walcott's *Omeros* both stages Caribbean history in instructive ways and mainly employs irregular variations on the conventional terza rima ("a-b-a / b-c-b") verse. He also alters the traditions of the modern verse epic in at least two significant ways by writing from a specifically Caribbean and postcolonial perspective of history.

First, in the context of Caribbean modernity, Walcott's epic engages in a fundamental contradiction particular to Caribbean history. In his review of C.L.R. James' modernist Caribbean historiography *The Black Jacobins*, Wilson Harris articulates this contradiction as "a profound and difficult vision of the [Caribbean] person -- a profound and difficult vision of essential unity within the most bitter forms of latent and active historical diversity" (*Tradition* 45). If particular ideas of history shape the conventions of the epic, *Omeros* develops its epic form from the historical contradictions, the violent power struggles and encounters between various cultures that mark Caribbean history and identity. If we understand Wilson's demand for a balance of cultural unity and diversity as a conventional notion of Caribbean historiography, we need to question in which ways *Omeros* endorses or deviates from Caribbean rather than from colonial forms of historiography. Second, strongly influenced by such American, British, and Caribbean modern writers as W.H. Auden, Robert Lowell, Joseph Brodsky, Aimé Césaire, and St. John Perse, Walcott now reconsiders some of the constitutive terms of modern poetry. For example, it seems inappropriate to apply such a modernist phrase as Kipling's "tale of the tribe" to Walcott's poetry without filtering it through a postcolonial perspective.

Similar to the conventional traditions of the epic, *Omeros* employs oral traditions of story-telling. Walcott brings together and rethinks several concerns of Caribbean writing and nation narration without resorting to folkloric articulations. In contrast to Brathwaite's

pan-Africanist uses of orality, Walcott resists employing oral traditions as a narrative device to authenticate cultural belonging. On his spiritual journey to Africa, Achille hears "the griot muttering his prophetic song / of sorrow that would be the past. It was a note, long-drawn / and endless in its winding" (148). The past understood as a repeated and founding history of suffering does what it "always does: suffer, and stare" (15). In other words, Achille will not find his history by searching for African cultural roots his ancestors possessed but he does not have. According to Walcott, the attempt to recover an African Eden risks regurgitating history as an endless chain of suffering and slavery. At the same time, by symbolically repeating a historical phase of Caribbean self-assertion, Achille must spiritually return to Africa in order to acknowledge both the cultural links between Africa and the Caribbean and the impossibility of a return to unfettered African origins. With the prophetic song of the griot, then, Walcott employs the epic convention of storytelling while critically locating this convention in a specific discourse of Caribbean history.

Instead of adapting the modern tradition of the verse epic wholeheartedly, then, Walcott asks whose and what history, oral and literary legacies comprise an epic? How does our understanding of history alter our understanding of the epic? Further, if colonial representations of the Caribbean projected the Caribbean population as a divided people without a nation and history, then Walcott's epic insists on the necessity to make a postcolonial claim to nationhood at a time when the West and an increasingly globalized economy demand the decentralization of nation-states. In order to provide a clearer context for my later discussion of Walcott's use of metaphor, I want to examine his project of a particular Caribbean historiography in more detail. While this will allow me to read metaphor in postcolonial terms, it will also illustrate the various dialectical closures Walcott's use of metaphor effects.

Walcott and Caribbean historiography

Walcott's critique and his vision of Caribbean historiography is made clear in his essay "The Muse of History" (1974). He criticizes the "wayside prophets [and] [. . .] the epic-minded poet" who longs to find empirical facts of history in the island's "ruins" to "celebrate[] what little there is" (8-9). Similar to Wole Soyinka's critique of African revivalists, Walcott's position argues that the 'decolonizing of the mind' cannot adopt the techniques of colonial historiography; in fact, he charges that the self-affirmative rhetoric of historical suffering and deprivation is still encumbered in dominant historiographies of unequivocal origins. Walcott's critique of a historiography based on the "visible presence of ruins" (1974, 8) is not unlike what Derrida calls the "metaphysical presence" that asserts the unquestionable truth of Western philosophy. What is excluded from Walcott's account, however, is the story of the victim, a story which does not always need to be one of endlessly reproduced victimization. To Walcott, an exhibition of "all the paraphernalia of degradation and cruelty" of history makes "the ovens of Auschwitz and Hiroshima [. . .] the temples of the race. Morbidity is the inevitable result." Thus, "history bases its truth on shame or on revenge" (9). Thus, it is not surprising to hear the narrator of *Omeros* cry out: "I swore, I'm tired of their [British colonizers'] fucking guilt, / and our fucking envy!" (269-70). While Walcott criticizes the nationalist and race-based rhetoric of the negritude movement, his own rhetoric of "race" and "morbidity" makes him suspect toward a depoliticized conceptualization of history.

Walcott argues for a productive amnesia that, to a certain extent, replaces history for an epic narrative "already written [. . .] in the mouths of the tribe, a tribe which had courageously yielded its history ("Muse" 9). Walcott's suggestion is problematic in that it demands a forgetting of history yet, at the same time, advances a modernist tradition of epic writing as if this tradition were positioned outside of history. If we assume that Walcott's concepts of historical amnesia and the epic aim at constructing alternative memories and forms of knowledge, we need to question the effectiveness of these concepts. Commenting

on postcolonial strategies of memory production, Spivak observes that "it is a great mistake to think that one has become an amnesiac. [. . .] [I]t is only with reference to certain kinds of memories that one constructs alternative memories" ("Rhetoric" 302). Indeed, the works of such writers as Toni Morrison, David Dabydeen, and M.G. Vassanji persistently struggle with the impossibility to write outside of history and to produce historical narratives from the victim's perspective without assuming that this perspective is infallible or unchangeable. To suppose that one can write through an amnesia of history either suggests a negation of history or risks totalizing different interpretations of history. Walcott's idea of the "already written" epic "in the mouth of the tribe" ironically demonstrates that Walcott himself cannot escape history, particularly that of modern poetry. Although Walcott's notion of amnesia risks foreclosing a critique of the traditions out of which he writes, we must not simplify Walcott's idea of a productive amnesia. Instead, we need to look at the ways in which Walcott's understanding of amnesia signifies a historical absence that is characteristic for Caribbean concepts of history.

The physical history of slavery, with its experience of death, cultural, national, and linguistic displacement, creates a "darkness" (Walcott, "Muse" 4), a blank spot in memory that forestalls processes of national identification other than those marked by suffering, shame, and deprivation. In the aftermath of slavery, the absence of memory gives rise to Walcott's Adamic vision of the Caribbean, a vision that names and claims the countries of deportation, because "[t]he New World was wide enough for a new Eden / of various Adams" (Omeros 181). By foregrounding the linguistic legacy of the creole continuum and its potential to produce names and metaphors, the idea of a "new Eden," of a new historical beginning, Walcott connects the epic, and its inscribed mission of nation formation, with metaphor's properties of naming. While his emphasis on metaphor can be read as a normative form of nation narration, in the context of an absent Caribbean history, this emphasis employs and asserts the trope's function of articulating and claiming an identity. Read in its specific historical context of black self-assertion in the 1970s,

Walcott's Adamic New World vision formulates a concept of Caribbean identity based on the instability of language and meaning production and thus presents an alternative to the binarism of identity prevalent at the time. Further, in the context of Walcott's critical writing of that time, his concern with names and metaphors constitutes the central elements of his idea of cultural mimicry as a condition for Caribbean historiography. To insist on metaphor's ability to claim a specific identity also contests colonial practices of control and disempowerment and attempts to forge a strategic national unity necessary for formulating political agendas of self-rule. In his literary work, Walcott stresses naming to assign metaphor a more prominent role than the Homeric epic does. Homer, as Richmond Lattimore reminds us, "does not use metaphor extensively," but instead "develops the more explicit simile" (41) which "is complete in itself" and produces similarities (42). Thus, in the Homeric epic the simile participates in the construction of a timeless and unchangeable narrative of heroic deeds performed by separated tribal communities. Walcott, however, uses metaphor both to negotiate non-linear concepts of time and to extrapolate the contradictions involved in naming and identity formation.

If *Omeros* presents absence as an integral part of Caribbean history, absence also informs the poem's representation of time. Seven Seas, the blind Tiresias of cultures and Homeric storyteller of the Caribbean, tells the narrator of *Omeros* that

> Your wanderer is a phantom from the boy's shore
>
> Mark you, *he* does not go; he sends his narrator;
> he plays tricks with time because there are two journeys
> in every odyssey, one on worried water,
>
> the other crouched and motionless, without noise.
> [. . . . .]
>   but the right journey
> is motionless. (291)

Seven Seas indicates that the wandering narrator may have physically left the island, but spiritually and poetically he always navigated the historically and racially divided world of his childhood. Citing Walcott's earlier collection of poetry, *Another Life* (1973), Seven

Seas reminds the narrator that *Omeros* has no claims to originality or singularity. Instead, the poem emerges from a broken and multilayered epic memory of Caribbean history. Like John Figueroa, we may ask "*where is home*" in *Omeros* (196), and what are the implications of the "two journeys," of the double odyssey of exile? Indeed, in *Omeros* exile refers to both the torments of the Middle Passage and the odyssey of the wandering poet, whose task it is to relieve history from its memories of victimization through the "motionless" journey of the mind and the imagination. Yet, the narrator describes the still journey of the mind in essentially modernist terms as the "right journey" that "returns to the port from which it must start" (291). From this perspective, Walcott's double odyssey of exile also risks reconfirming the theme of homecoming and the quest for a restored male identity and order associated with Homeric notions of exile.

In the divided postcolonial world, however, home, as Bhabha reminds us, is not a geographical locus of belonging as Homer would have it, but rather a psychological state of displacement akin to the Freudian notion of the uncanny. The "'unhomely,'" as Bhabha calls this state of never being quite grounded yet haunted by the desire for an impossible identity, refers to a "condition of [. . .] cross-cultural initiations" in which "the borders between home and world become confused" (*Location* 9). What is conventionally perceived as the privacy of the home appears as the site "for history's most intricate invasions" (9). For example, Sethe's home in *Beloved* is a house haunted by Sethe's personal history and the history of slavery. With respect to *Omeros*, we can generally argue that the name Homer functions as an uncanny pun that haunts but does not determine Walcott's text. A closer look at the passage quoted above, however, suggests a number of more particular readings of the unhomely as a cross-cultural pattern of identity in *Omeros*. The "motionless" journey of Caribbean history implies that the discovery of cultural belonging is less a journey of perpetual exile than a spiritual tracing of Caribbean history and memory. Like the notion of the "unhomely," Seven Seas' idea of the "motionless"

journey plays "tricks with time" (291) because the present is conditioned by a return of memories and traumatic events from times immemorial.

Reminiscent of the stifling conditions on slave ships sailing from Africa to the Caribbean, Achille makes his reversed spiritual journey back to Africa in a motionless posture, lying sun-struck in his canoe. The time of the present and the time of the unhomely open parallel time frames of memory through which Achille traces and enacts the lives of his ancestors. The metaphor of the "motionless" journey functions performatively: it cites the literal constraints of slavery and translates them into a concept of Caribbean historiography based on ambiguity and repetition rather than on a linear narrative of cause and effect. More specifically, the "motionless" journey makes a movement backwards and forwards in time and arbitrates "unfinished shapes of reality" (Harris, "Interview 105) through metaphorical operations, changing Achilles' understanding of identity and time. "Time," as he finds out on his journey "translates" (137). In Walcott's concept of epic writing, metaphors encompass a process of cultural translations and temporal shifts in which, as Walcott remarks by punning on T.S. Eliot's notion of time, "[t]here is no beginning but no end" ("Muse" 12). It is in the gaps each translation produces, in the losses and changes of meaning and referentiality, that Walcott finds history.[74]

In his essay "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry" (1974), Walcott develops his particular view of Caribbean history and writing. The essay begins with a critical response to J.A. Froude's and V.S. Naipaul's indictment that the Caribbean is a country without a history where nothing has ever been created. Such a view, Walcott points out, is based on a linear and progressive model of history whose singular legitimizing source remains the old colonial metropolis. In turn, Walcott charges Naipaul with overlooking the "ephemeral, unstable" nature of "power" (51). Although Walcott acknowledges the crucial role of power in cultural discourses, he also maintains that power denotes "the least important aspect of any culture, who rules" (51). Instead, he states "[w]hat energizes our society is the spiritual force of a culture shaping itself, and it can do this without the formula of

politics" (51). In other words, Walcott rejects the corruptive use and abuse of power as the mimicry of colonial authority, while advocating the possibility of newness intrinsic in the power of language. What is at stake in the negotiation of cultural identities, he emphasizes, is not the truth of empirical history, but "the claim" (54) to invent history. Yet, Walcott makes this claim to history by devaluating the operations of power in favor of a poetic interiority of "spiritual forces" in order to envision a hybrid national Caribbean identity. In *Omeros*, this inward and untranslatable space of the imagination is by no means apolitical. Instead, Helen at once embodies and generates this untranslatable space of the poetic imagination.

What emerges from the absence of originality and a divided cultural legacy, then, is an originary mimicry which operates metaphorically through language. The legacy of language. Walcott observes, is the one thing Africans and Asians "carried over" during their various historical exiles and deracinations. To Walcott, language provides a universal tool of mimicry that is imperative for human survival and evolution. Walcott's "anthropological ideal of mimicry" (53), however, associates the creative resources of mimicry with a biological model of procreation and camouflage whose dynamics rely on singular and simultaneous errors as well as on ingenious and poetic invention. Cultural mimicry keeps the signature of an original legible within a derivative so that, as Walcott adroitly argues, "[t]o name is to contradict" (57) and the poet's duty is "to reiterate" (57). If we want to read *Omeros* as an epic, then, we need to understand the epic genre in Walcott's terms of mimicry, naming, and reiteration. Further, Walcott's emphasis on writing Caribbean history and identity through strategies of contradiction and reiteration intersects with performative practices of identity formation and thus invites a performative reading of *Omeros*.

If language, as a reiterative practice of mimicry invents through "the existence and accidents of natural elements" (56), then the grand narratives of empirical history lose their stronghold. Walcott compares the significance of history to a carnivalesque performance in

which waste is subject to perpetual renewal and history denotes, as he contemplates elsewhere, a "timeless, yet habitable moment" ("Muse" 1). Being of fleeting and immediate nature, "[h]istory, " Walcott argues, becomes "art" when "taught as action" ("The Caribbean" 57). As Walcott understands it, cultural mimicry turns out to be a poetic and historiographical project grounded in a biological model of procreation and hybridity as well as in the specific topography, popular culture, and historical experience of the Caribbean. This model, however, risks collapsing a biological discourse of reproduction with a cultural discourse of invention and imagination regardless of the traditional gender inflections that mark and divide these discourses. Further, if history is art, as Walcott suggests, then this also implies a transcendental turn. More clearly, both history and art easily escape a conceptual frame of power which unwittingly facilitates an essentialist view of cultural identities through the inward eye of the male poet. As Rei Terada critically observes, "the logic" of Walcott's cultural mimicry "tracks the derivative back to originality and rediscovers it there in its domesticated form" (25).

Walcott's idea of history as an act of mimicry, then, stages the derivative and the heterogeneous as cultural originality. From this perspective, *Omeros*'s vision of cultural hybridity inadvertently implies a narrative of national originality grounded in the dispersed geography of the Caribbean archipelago. This narrative of the Caribbean nation tends to universalize and pose hybridity as the dominant configuration of Caribbean national belonging. In his Nobel Prize speech *The Antilles. Fragments of Epic Memory*, Walcott links his understanding of Caribbean originality to his practices of epic writing:

> Deprived of their original language, the captured and indentured tribes create their own, accreting and secreting fragments of an old, an epic memory, from Asia, from Africa, [. . .] an ancestral, an ecstatic rhythm in the blood that cannot be subdued by slavery or indenture. [. . .] The original language dissolves from the exhaustion of distance like fog trying to cross an ocean, but this process of renaming, of finding new metaphors, is the same process that the poet faces every morning of his working day, making his own tools like Crusoe, assembling nouns from necessity. (no page numbers)

To Walcott the epic is written not as a linear chronicle of the nation but through the effects of a history of terror, survival, and regeneration. In such a project, metaphor has its traditional place as a trope of nation narration and Aristotelian ingenuity. Similarly, if, in Walcott's account, metaphor refers to a process of "assembling nouns from necessity," we might argue that Walcott's notion of metaphor corresponds to de Man's reading of metaphor.

A closer reading of the quoted passage, however, reveals that Walcott locates metaphor in his discourse of cultural mimicry. "[R]enaming," Walcott says, involves "finding" rather than inventing "new metaphors," so that metaphor circulates in and can be grafted on various discourses of history and identity. In Walcott's poetic universe, his Adamic vision of the Americas, metaphor belongs to Crusoe's tools of claiming the New World. Yet Crusoe no longer refers to Defoe's narrative of a bourgeois education through colonial conquest, but to "Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea" (Walcott, "Crusoe" 35). In the "New World," Walcott says, Crusoe "is the embodiment of the schizophrenic Muse whose children are of all races" (40). The originality of Crusoe's New World language, then, derives from the legacies of the Middle Passage in which language is both an effective tool of oppression and resistance. Thus, to assemble "nouns from necessity" recalls the loss of languages during the Middle Passage and the Caribbean tradition to forge a new language out of the former languages of colonial imprisonment. Although Walcott's epic employs a traditional Muse, it is a schizophrenic one who speaks with a divided and broken tongue, invoking multiple and hybrid cultural origins. Walcott's use of metaphor, then, corresponds to dominant forms of nation narration while arbitrating the claim to an understanding of originality that is inextricably linked to and, paradoxically, derived from cultural and historical acts of mimicry. Indeed, Walcott's notion of originality cannot be conceptualized as a singularity that relies on difference. Instead, it ought to be understood as a form of cultural translation that reassembles the "fragments of an old, epic memory" in order to produce a specifically Caribbean national and cultural identity.

Walcott's position on originality and epic writing illustrates that the contradiction between originality and difference is in fact an aporia because, to a certain extent, the assertion of difference entails to articulate originality in one form or another. The danger in the attempt to supersede this aporia lies not only in totalizing cultural and national identities, but also in reproducing certain elements of a holistic and dominantly male aesthetic. In particular, Walcott's anthropological rhetoric of mimicry, his understanding of history as action, as well as his decontextualized reliance on the conventions of the modern verse epic resonate with the very dangers of cultural reductionism he sets out to avoid. Both his notion of history and the epic push, as I have illustrated, toward a reconciliation of cultural and historical contradictions. From this perspective we can surmise that *Omeros* cannot and perhaps does not intend to escape the predicament of metaphor, namely its return toward a dialectical closure. However, by reading metaphor performatively we can also generate critical readings of *Omeros* that foreground the universalizing tendencies of Walcott's text. With Walcott's understanding of Caribbean historiography in mind, we can now explore the different ways in which *Omeros* employs metaphor in productive and normative ways. While the names of Omeros, Seven Seas, and Achilles destablize binary concepts of identity through catachresis and reiteration, the metaphors of the swift and of Helen have normative effects and produce a homogeneous narrative of the Caribbean nation.

Naming and Catachresis: Omeros and Seven Seas

for
in every surface I sought
the paradoxical flash of an instant
in which every facet was caught
in a crystal of ambiguities
[. . . . .]
I lived in a different gift,
its element metaphor

Derek Walcott, "Homage to Gregoria." (200)

and children, look at these stars
over Valencia's forest!

[. . . . .]
tell me, what do they look like?
Answer, you damned little Arabs!
Sir, fireflies caught in molasses.

Derek Walcott, "Names." (308)

Walcott's *Omeros* can be read as a project of translation and intentional mistranslation. This project, however, is not restricted to the poem's generic configurations, but extends to its use of language in general and metaphor in particular. The two passages quoted above illustrate the significance of metaphor in Walcott's earlier work. The first one is taken from Walcott's most autobiographical collection of poetry *Another Life* (1973) and contemplates his decision to become a poet rather than a painter. Although the manuscript of *Omeros* is illustrated with a number of Walcott's drawings and watercolors, Walcott's primary profession is that of a poet. Painting, as he understands it, cannot adequately express the "paradoxical flash," the "crystal of ambiguities" of Caribbean life and language. Instead, his "gift" is the language of poetry, namely of "metaphor." While the first quoted passage refers to metaphor as language in general, the second quoted passage specifies that language and metaphor are linked to a process of naming and unnaming Caribbean history. For example, the colonial education system requires children to describe nature in terms of European aesthetics and language ("these stars / over Valencia's forest!") regardless of their own environment and experiences. Yet, as the passage indicates, there is also a moment of resistance and untranslatability in the children's response "Sir, fireflies caught in molasses." In this context, metaphor no longer operates as a colonial trope. Rather, as an example of Walcottian mimicry, it foregrounds the collision between two incongruent and competing frames of reference.

Considering that Walcott's poetic element is translation, we may take the liberty to read the "gift" of metaphor in its German translation as the "poison" of metaphor. In Walcott's cosmology, metaphor is an instrument of colonial domination as well as a cure from the history of oppression. The process of Philoctete's healing in *Omeros* best

illustrates this double function of metaphor. Though reminiscent of a Derridean understanding of metaphor, here "poison," I suggest, refers to the characteristic practices of Walcott's Caribbean language usage, namely of catachresis, translation, and misquotation. In *Omeros* this practice first appears in the misspelling of Achille's canoe "*In God We Troust*" (8). Misciting the inscription of US-dollar bills, the name indicates the dominance of the currency in and the reification of the Caribbean as tourist paradise. But Achille insists on his misspelling when he says "Leave it! Is God' spelling and mine" (8), indicating that the agency of his character lies in the productive qualities of metaphor and mimicry. While the text displays many examples of mistranslation, including the narrator's own translations of French patois into English as well as the translation of many earlier Walcott poems into the narrative of *Omeros*, the various translations of the names Omeros and Achille enable a performative reading of *Omeros*.

First of all, Omeros counts as Homer's forgotten Greek name and functions as a translation backwards and forwards in time, linking an imagined heroic European past to the Caribbean present. Many of Walcott's critics correctly see the title of the book as setting an agenda for the representation of a diffused and almost anonymous genealogy of which no origins can be found. But the use of Homer's original name also implies a cleansing of the ideological ballast the name of Homer has been endowed with in the course of Western literary history and philosophy. In this way, the name Omeros points back to a time before colonial history, before the West made its exclusive claim to civilization in the name of Homer. The title of *Omeros*, then, rolls the dice again to negotiate that claim from a position that favors multiple rather than exclusive origins. We first encounter Omeros in his parallel character, Seven Seas:

> Except for one hand he sat as still as marble,
> with his egg-white eyes, fingers recounting the past
> of another sea, measured by the stroking oars.
>
> O open this day with the conch's moan, Omeros,
> as you did in my boyhood, when I was a noun
> gently exhaled from the plate of the sunrise. (12)

The two tercets delineate the narrative's dominant themes of language, names, and time. These themes occur in double configurations. On the one hand, Seven Seas, traveler, blind seer, and griot of the histories of oppression, resembles the marble busts of monumental and imperial history, foreshadowing Omeros's return in the last two books of the poem. On the other, time, like the sea itself, is infinite and recountable, erasing the monuments of the past through the poet's inward perspective to envision what Walcott elsewhere calls a "history of emotion."

The second tercet recalls the time when language was self-identical, when the "I was a noun." The elegiac tone and archaic diction of the apostrophe, however, betray this memory to be a short-lived nostalgia to escape a radically inescapable ambiguity of language. In fact, the nostalgia circumscribes the normative aspects of a proper name. Being a noun, from Seven Seas' perspective, however, does not directly refer to the power-invested naming strategies of colonialism. Instead, the metaphor of the sunrise indicates that he alludes to those forms of naming used in what Walcott calls the "twilight" of independence when Caribbean writers tried to invent new names outside the legacy of colonialism. Reversing binary terms or deriving names from African landscapes and mythologies, however, reproduces essentialist forms of cultural and racial belonging imposed by colonialism. Names, Walcott argues, are produced "from the depth of suffering" and make "the rage for revenge [. . .] hard to exorcise" ("Twilight" 11). Modern Caribbean literary history begins with the desire to "forg[e] [. . .] a language that supersedes mimicry." At that time, "metaphor," Walcott observes, "was not a symbol but conversation, and because every poet begins with such ignorance, in the anguish that every noun will be freshly, resonantly named, because a new melodic inflection meant a new mode, there was no better beginning" ("Twilight" 17). Using a name as self-identical presence closes off the existence and status of its carrier. In its assertive reiteration the name fixes an identity to the bearer of the name through an act of foreclosure. But naming as a projection of a cohesive identity is also a normative necessity in the Homeric epic.

Willard Spiegelman, for instance, observes that "[n]aming puts a cap upon action" and "confers heroic status upon the doer of heroic deeds [. . .] the hero is [. . .] requited by patronymics and epithets to assure proper remembrance" (187). *Omeros*, though, denies the nominal law of a singular father through the direct invocation of Omeros.

Calling somebody by her name, we remember, is also an act of interpellation which confers a social and cultural position. This position is already present before the call and gains its instability from the caller's position, for he or she must have been previously hailed into the position of the caller. To invoke Omeros by his name, therefore, shifts the concept of the name towards its inherent instabilities and places it into a dynmamic relationship between addressee and addressed. At this moment, the name Omeros is no longer fixed in an eternal and universal time frame. Instead, it becomes a site of discursive contest. The narrator, who is not directly socially interpellated but acts as a multiple "I," opens the discursive field of the name Omeros when he solemnly declares "I said, 'Omeros,' / and O was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was / both mother and sea in our Antillean patois, / *os*, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes / [. . .] Omeros was the crunch of dry leaves" (14). Breaking up the name into semes may give the impression that the narrator effects a fragmented identity of Omeros which fits as much the Caribbean islands as it does the Greek islands. We need to bear in mind, however, that in the beginning of the poem, the narrator is unreliable, for he does not yet know the perils of writing a Caribbean history based on suffering, dispossession, and poverty.

As a descriptive and rigid designator, the name Omeros baptizes the Caribbean as a new mother country, grounded in a history of victimization and extinction. We can read the history of an almost complete extinction of the Amerindian population through both the syllable "os," the Amerindian word for bone, and Walcott's often used metaphor of the "crunch[ing]" and crackling of "dry leaves" to indicate an erased Amerindian presence. Harris argues that the Amerindian legacy in the Caribbean produces a history of "[t]ransubstantiation" (*Explorations* 38), a past that has become fossilized and is readable

only as a palimpsest in Caribbean literature and mythology. More precisely, one group of Amerindians, the Caribs, used to "consume[] a morsel of the enemy-god, the conquistador-god — that had invaded their world — and fashion[] a flute from his bones" (38). Like the curing properties of poison, the incorporation of a part of the conquistador's body leads to a symbolic victory over the colonial invaders.

The name Omeros, however, does not emphasize the mythic presence of the Amerindian past. Instead, it is one part of the name equal in proportion to the name's European and *patois* inscriptions. The relative status of the Amerindian legacy in the name Omeros also implies that *Omeros* dramatizes history in relative terms, homogenizing historically unequal power relations between Amerindians and conquistadors in retrospective. If we read the name as a whole rather than in its segments, we can perceive the ways in which the name dissolves its own referential boundaries. With the narrator's almost biblical declaration of "I said," the act of naming implies Walcott's Adamic vision of the Caribbean based on mimicry: it reiterates and cites an original act of divine naming and, to quote Butler, "inaugurates" Omeros "within the divinely sanctioned community of" (*Bodies* 212) Caribbean men. Since the name Omeros derives its authority from a number of reiterations and inscriptions, it is also performatively produced. The narrator's spelling of Omeros unwittingly seems to slant towards catachresis because the O in Omeros also describes the empty circle of negativity and sound which questions the positive identity a rigid designator seeks to confer. Further, Omeros figures as a multilingual composite and thus is subjected to a process of translation in which certain referentiality becomes obsolete yet not completely erased. The tendency of a rigid name towards catachresis, however, is an integral element of the performative production of metaphors.

The threatening force of catachresis also invades Plunkett's attempts at writing an imperial history of the island. To him "History was fact, / History was a cannon, not a lizard" (92). In his fear to lose or never to have had the authority over such a history, Plunkett mocks: "Iounalo, my royal arse!" He wonders whether "his countrymen," then,

"died [. . .][f]or a lizard / with an Aruac name? It will be rewritten / by black pamphleteers [. . .] / and we'll be its [history's] villians, fading from the map / (he said "villians" for "villains"). And when it's over / we'll be the bastards!" (92). What escapes Plunkett's history of facts is the knowledge of "how time could be reworded" (95) other than in the "Homeric repetition / of details" (95-6). These details were "coincidence" and "prophesy" (96). In the Homeric epic, however, repetition is normative since places and events are repeated to tie a heroic identity to names and commit them to a collective national memory of achievement. In Plunkett's historiography normative repetitions yield nothing but "the battle's numerological poetry" (91) and the "namesake" (94) of a desired but never begotten son. Instead of grounding himself in the imagined security of a patrilinear genealogy, Plunkett must learn to read the catachrestic effects of his own text.

First, the narrator's intrusion and emphasis on Plunkett's misspelling of "villain"[75] signifies Plunkett's own class background. Plunkett needs to acknowledge that colonialism facilitated his flight from the social misery and poverty endured by the English working class since the beginning of the nineteenth century. To Plunkett, moreover, becoming a "bastard[]"of history (92) signifies racial and cultural contamination. But *Omeros* seeks to overcome the polarity between blame and guilt, revenge and remorse, purity and hybridity. While this project might render Walcott vulnerable to accusations of cultural relativism, it also articulates the ways in which he positions himself as both a Caribbean writer and a character of *Omeros*. To use the word "bastard," Walcott says with an autobiographical reference, expresses "the faith of using old names anew, so that mongrel as I am, something prickles in me when I see the word Ashanti as with the word Warwickshire, both separately intimating my grandfathers's roots, both baptising this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian" ("Twilight" 10). In contrast to Plunkett's anxieties, Walcott's notion of being a "bastard" designates a productive appropriation of the inevitable results of colonialism in general and of the Caribbean's history of slavery, displacement, and violence in particular.

Reiterated names, then, act as performative metaphors when the repetition emphasizes a form of difference that destablizes the rigid identifications of a name and confers another kind of meaning to that name. In *Omeros* names are subject to slight but constant changes, shifting apparently fixed identity patterns. For example, Seven Seas gains his name from his community since "[h]e claimed he'd sailed around the world" (17). His former name, however, was "Old St. Omere" (17), recalling not only the name Omeros but the name of Walcott's childhood friend, the Caribbean painter Dunstan St. Omer. The changes in detail establish associative links between the vision of a painter and that of a seer and poet. These details also prevent unambiguous readings or the sliding into certain identities. "Old St. Omere," however, also recalls another saint. In book one of bp Nichol's serial long poem *The Martyrology* (1972-1987), the lyrical I invokes and is guided by saint orm to embark on a poetic experiment that combines oral traditions of storytelling with visual and narrative forms of writing.[76] As with almost every name in Walcott's long poem, the mythic aura of Seven Seas' name is interrupted by the ahistoricity of everyday life, for the name came "from a cod-liver-oil label / with its wriggling swordfish." As a literal product of the sea—the medium of time and empty metaphors—, the name acquires a new blessing that marks Seven Sea's language and rids the name of its metaphorical status. "[H]is words were not clear," as Ma Kilman observes. To her it was "Greek [. . .] [o]r old African babble" (18). Here the narrator's ahistorical explanation of Seven Sea's name competes with Ma Kilman's reading of the name: To her the name "Seven Seas" signifies what it says, namely a poetic dramatization of cultural hybridity and multiple translations that remain in part unreadable and emerge from the specific historical and geographical conditions of the Caribbean.

Seven Seas, of course, is conscious of a name's poisonous and curing qualities. He tells Philoctete that Achille is "out looking for [. . .] his name and his soul" (154). What Achille finds on his spiritual journey back to Africa, however, is a series of translations and renamings. In the Battle of the Saints, the decisive battle over St. Lucia between the British

and the French, Achille is renamed by the British admiral for his valorous deeds that brought about British victory. "Afolabe" becomes "'Achilles,'/ which, to keep things simple, he let himself be called" (83). In the course of time, Achilles' name loses the "s" and transforms into Achille, to be pronounced A-chill. History literally simplifies Achilles' name from three to two syllables. Like the misspelling of Achille's canoe, the new pronunciation of Achille's name demands a mispronunciation of the earlier name and suggests the appropriation of a colonially given name. As A-chill, Achille's name symbolically moves away from written towards oral narratives.

On his journey to Africa, Achille discovers that the oral pronunciation of his name holds more meaning than a name's traditional function to impart a specific identity. In an encounter with his father Afolabe he is told that "[a] name means something [. . .] every name is a blessing." Afolabe asks Achille, "[d]id they think you were nothing in that other kingdom?" (137). Achille's answer suggests a material and literal reading of "nothingness" when he says that he does not "know what the name means. It means something, / maybe. What's the difference? In the world I come from / we accept the sounds we were given" (138). To Achille, then, a name is primarily an ahistorical form of sound without its identifying and restrictive functions. It is subject only to accidental change over time. In short, a name appears to be a product of mimicry as Walcott understands it. Walcott's agenda of naming and unnaming is a familiar one in postcolonial contexts. In the specific context of the Caribbean, the emphasis on the oral production of a name indicates a strategy to cope with, in Silvio Torres-Saillant's words, "a catastrophic history in a manner that points the way out of fragmentation. [. . .] [N]ames [need to] break away from the modes of perception taught by the culture that inflicted the fragmentation upon the region" (152). It seems to me, however, that the understanding of a name as pure sound risks dehistoricizing identities and privileging the presence or truth of the spoken word over a productive articulation of difference. Achille's question "[w]hat's the difference?" remains unanswered and perhaps postponed until the desire for Caribbean unity gives way to a

political agenda that sets out to define, as such female Caribbean writers as Michelle Cliff and Dionne Brand repeatedly emphasize, the diversity of Caribbean cultural and gender relations.

In the course of Walcott's poem, Omeros's name gradually undergoes a process of linguistic and cultural erosion. First, before Achille departs on his journey, the unnamed narrator laments the lack of history and epic literature in the Caribbean, sighing "O Thou, my Zero, is an impossible prayer" (75). It is the circle of the O in Omeros that comes to signify both the Caribbean condition of a negative absence and the need to start from and to return to this absence in order to make it culturally specific and productive. The sound of the O, however, is muffled by a melancholic desire for originality when, upon Achille's return from Africa, the narrator exclaims "[a]nd I'm homing with him, Homeros, my nigger, / my captain" (159). While the shift from noun to verb in "homing" and the double function of Homer as muse and guide of writing indicates the narrator's acknowledgment of his divided existence, this only seems to be a half-hearted acknowledgment. For the narrator clouds and silences the sound of Omeros with a preceding "H" and thus refrains from an abdication of history. Filtered through the stories of Helen and Philoctete, the O metamorphoses into a wound, into the "hole in [Helen's] heart [. . .] the low-fingered O of an Aruac flute" (152). Helen's and Philoctete's wounds, however, will be cured with the means that caused them. Receiving his healing bath from Ma Kilman, Philoctete utters an "agonized O: the scream of centuries" (246). This primordial scream throws off "[c]enturies of servitude," as Walcott puts it elsewhere, and the sound of the human voice (re)initiates Philoctete into his own humanity and community.

The catachrestic invocation of Omeros, then, pays "homage" (294) to and exorcises Omeros. While the name Omeros can no longer contain essentialist notions of history and identity, the metamorphosis of the name is still firmly anchored in the Homeric epic and in the normative operations of metaphor. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno read Homer's *Odyssey* as an allegory of how myth contains the

self-destructive principles of Enlightenment and *vice versa*. They argue that Odysseus, the prototype of the bourgeois wanderer who defeats irrational myth in favor of male self-assertion, survives by imitating and mastering the natural forces that threaten his survival. In the Homeric epic, Horkheimer and Adorno point out, mimicry "enters into the service of domination" (57) and "survival [. . .] depend[s] on the concession of one's own defeat" (57). Similar to Walcott's notion of cultural mimicry, Odysseus' survival requires him to govern nature through mimicry. Interestingly enough, the most convincing example Horkheimer and Adorno give is their reading of the encounter between Odysseus and Polyphemus. As is well-known, Odysseus escapes the Cyclops by playing on the resembling sound between the name "Odysseus" and the one he cunningly gives to Polyphemus: "Udeis" (67), meaning nobody. Thus, by denying his identity and, in fact, turning it into a negativity, a non-existence ("nobody"), Odysseus overcomes the one-eyed Cyclops and thereby commits a deed that eventually asserts his name and adds to his historical and literary legacy. In Horkheimer and Adorno's words, Odysseus becomes a subject by denying his own identity through a mimicry of "the amorphous," (67) the Cyclops's lack of self-consciousness.[77] In this way, the mimicry of names returns to the same. Put differently, the presupposition that Odysseus has an identity allows him to deny it through a trick of names. In turn, this denial has a self-consolidating effect, for it affirms what Odysseus negates, namely his identity. In contrast to Bhabha's and, to a certain extent, Walcott's theory of mimicry as a subversive act of resistance, Horkheimer's and Adorno's discussion of it illustrates that mimicry belongs to the fundamental strategies of constructing a bourgeois, male, Western identity. The movement toward sameness and identity, implicit in Horkheimer's and Adorno's reading of mimicry, also determines Walcott's epic poem when the narrator declares the sea to be the epic of the Caribbean because it "never altered its metre/ to suit the age, a wide page without metaphors." Yet, the narrator once more conjures Omeros as "Our last resort as much as yours, Omeros" (296). Thus, the metamorphosis of the name Omeros swings back into its new but unwittingly

rigid designation of a negativity which, as I have discussed earlier, articulates Walcott's notion of the Caribbean nation and identity. In this sense, we can read *Omeros* as a foundationalist narrative.

The Swift and Helen: Walcott's Construction of Cultural and Gender Difference

If *Omeros* presents names as unstable signifiers, it also presents more systematic and less protean metaphors to the reader. In contrast to the names of the poem, the metaphor of the swift belongs to Walcott's set of Caribbean metaphors and does not carry the weight of Western literary history and philosophy. However, read as an adjective, "swift" also refers back to the most frequently used descriptions of Achilleus in the *Iliad*; read as a noun, it projects Walcott's notion of the Caribbean epic experience of survival and time. In *Omeros* the visual sign of the swift is usually inscribed with the symbol of the cross (survival of the Middle Passage), its movement with that of the circle (time). The swift metaphorically functions as the messenger of narrative and cultural returns, signaling a disturbing closure of various narrative strands in *Omeros*.

Achille first sees the swift "crossing the cloud-surf." From the distance of Achille's vision, the bird seems a "small thing" and "confused by the waves" (6). Its physical fragility contrasts with its ability to travel vast distances. As an airborne migratory species it is not rooted in a specific soil or time. As a metaphor, then, the swift marks a narrative locus outside of both historical time and discursively produced power relations. In fact, the text draws a clear line between a historicized and dehistoricized presentation of the swift. The former appears in Maud's ornithological tapestry which she sews according to the same empiricist principles Plunkett writes his imperial history of the Caribbean. On her quilt, birds appear in the manner of nineteenth century natural history with "Greek and Latin tags" and the swift is called "*l'hirondelle des Antilles*."[78] By means of an authorial, though bracketed, intervention, the narrator emphasises "(their name for the sea-swift)"

(88), clarifying that the swift's local signification can be neither fully translated nor claimed by history. To situate the swift, and thus metaphor, outside of history generates a conceptual division between a narrative outside and inside and underscores metaphor's dialectical operations. The metaphor's ability to signify dominant history occurs when Achille gives it a Christian connotation. Immediately after Achille detects the swift, "he ma[kes] / a swift sign of the cross" (6). When Achille blesses his new canoe by "ma[king] the swift's sign" (8), the text repeats the Christian symbolism of the metaphor of the swift.

While the swift thematically marks the racial and cultural hybridity of St. Lucia, it also presents this hybridity as a result and form of exile that finds its fulfillment in a return to the Caribbean island. The swift guides Achille to Africa as well as Ma Kilman's search for the curative herb for Philoctete's festering leg. In fact, it is the "swift's blown seed" (69), the bird carried from Africa to the Caribbean, that smells as revolting as Philoctete's wound and yet provides his cure. But the swift does not merely refer to the spatial exiles and displacements during and after slavery. As a "mind- / messenger, [. . .] her speed outdart[s] Memory" (131) so that time and space are no longer opposites but must be read simultaneously. Achille, therefore, travels in stillness, without movement, coming "into his own beginning and his end, / for the swiftness of a second is all that memory takes" (134). In *Omeros* simultaneous rather than disjunctive temporalities open history towards an infinity of beginnings. Yet, if the swift signals parallel time frames and exile through its participation in the sections of *Omeros* set in the Caribbean and elsewhere alike, we need to question whether or not the swift metaphor tends to conflate different histories? Can the narrator really speak with equal faith of and for Achille as he speaks for a "Polish waitress" (211) in Canada? What does the narrator's father imply when he meets his now exiled son in Boston and tells him that "in its travelling all that the sea-swift does, / it does in a circular pattern" (188)? The swift's circular movement and its representation as the reversible "X of an hourglass" (189) imply that migration is a form of reversible exile every migrant

experiences in the same way as either an inward state of mind or as a desire to return to the place one has left behind.[79]

Carried by the swift, the notion of Caribbean cultural survival does not remain geographically restricted but spans the field of global migration. For example, we encounter the narrator once in New York and once in Canada. Like Tim in *The Origin of Waves*, he leads the life of a lonely, homeless, melancholic Odysseus who gazes on his multicultural environment with an attitude of both exclusion and incorporation. He lives "[l]ike a Jap soldier on his Pacific island / who prefers solitude to the hope of rescue." Alienated from himself and his environment, the narrator experiences his house as a disconnected, isolated "raft." To him migration does not occasion ethnicity as a discourse of possibilities and productive contradictions. Rather, he maintains, "castaways make friends with the sea; living alone / they learn to survive on fistfuls of rainwater" (171). But the narrator's self-perception as an isolated survivor is not without intention because it constructs his own subjectivity as self-conscious and omniscient. Not unlike the narrator of Neil Bisoondaath's *A Casual Brutality*, Walcott's narrator projects his own isolation into the urban "passer-by" who "avoided [his] dewy gaze with a cautious nod" (172). Assuming that his readings of his environment never fail, the narrator of *Omeros* constructs a cultural inside and outside of which he will always occupy the latter position. To him only an act of transcendence in which "[his] house is inside [him], everywhere" (174) can overcome this divide. This is a form of self-positioning, however, that denies ethnicity as a position from which to articulate different subjectivities and policies that change the paradigms of how to define the nation. In contrast to *Omeros*, Clarke's *The Origin of Waves* problematizes both the melancholic desire for a return to the Caribbean and the refusal to participate in shaping a multicultural agenda of the nation as the primary failure of its protagonist Tim.

In *Omeros*, the narrator erases ethnicity as a social and political practice and homogenizes gender differences. In fact, his interpretation of a Polish waitress in Canada comprehends women as sexualized objects to be absorbed into the narrator's desire to return to the Caribbean. Recalling the images of black female slave-miners, the narrator imagines the Polish waitress as "a pageboy haircut [. . .] pouring [. . .] coffee" with "eyes / wet as new coal" (210), "carry[ing] her wintry beauty into Canada" (211). And again, the narrator assumes the authority to read these eyes correctly as a "pitiless fiction" of migration. The exotic length of her Slavic name, the narrator asserts, "ran over the margin" of the immigration forms, suggesting that she will never fit into a society that is not her own. Such a view on migration presupposes that the "Polish waitress" rather than Canadian society has to undergo a process of assimilation. In the eyes of the narrator, migration seems to be a punishment void of the possibility to change dominant concepts of nationhood. However, in order to do justice to Walcott's text, we may also consider that the narrator's image of an expanding margin entails a positive connotation of migration: It contests a cohesive concept of the nation and bursts the nation's boundaries from its margins. However, the narrator's fantasy of the waitress as a "passport photo" showing a "scared face" (211) immediately puts a positive evaluation of migration into question. Indeed, to the narrator, immigrants appear to exist as an undefined mass of people, as "Zagajewski. Herbert. Milosz" (212). The Polish waitress, then, needs to be rescued. Her experience of migration, whatever its particulars may be, is valuable only in relation to the narrator's own preconceived notions of exile. Her rescue and his survival depend on the ways in which the narrator metaphorizes and elevates her as a reflexion of his own melancholic condition of exile. Eventually, he tells us, "[h]er name melted in mine" (211) so that his discourse of national belonging seems to be deethnicized and degenderized.

The narrator's reductive narrative of migration recalls those hegemonic effects and practices of global politics that subsume the local and particular under the global and the universal. While *Omeros* certainly emphasizes local Caribbean rather than global issues and

endorses inclusive forms of nation-formation, its underpinning politics, in Stuart Hall's terms, "forget[] that [they are] placed" and therefore "tr[y] to speak for everybody else" (185). As a female noun and homogenizing signifier of the local and the global, the swift travels the globe to return as the sign of the "hybrid organism" of a newly emerging Caribbean nation with its "cruciform shadow" (297). In this sense, the metaphor of the swift suggests a symbolic act of metaphysical incorporation: it designates closure through the dissolution of historical contradictions and fuses the precarious borders of cultural differences into cohesive units. For example, the narrator concludes: "I followed a sea-swift to both sides of this text; / her hyphen stitched its seam, like the interlocking / basins of a globe in which one half fits the next / into an equator, both shores neatly clicking / into a globe" (319). From the narrator's perspective, the hyphen reflects the fragmented geography of the Caribbean Antilles and links its various cultures into a whole, resolving the contradictions of Caribbean history and identity. Within a Canadian context, however, cultural hyphenation negotiates instead of resolves the various contradictions that emerge from those cultural margins Walcott's narrator chooses to appropriate in the name of a common and universal experience of exile.

Helen

The figure of Helen frequently recurs as an idealized or despised symbol of the Caribbean nation in Derek Walcott's poetic work. In his collection of autobiographical poems "Another Life," she appears as "the town's one clear-complexioned whore," who "leaves/ a plump and pumping vacancy" (161). In a later collection, *The Arkansas Testament*, a similarly enigmatic female character appears as "a statue, like a black Delacroix's/ *Liberty Leading the People*" (48). Although Walcott's long poem *Omeros* sets out to trace the question mark the earlier poems left behind Helen's name, the "vacancy" evoked by her name remains a troubling theoretical issue. In various literary and historical discourses, as we recall, the metaphor of a generic and abstract

woman has traditionally provided the vehicle for a symbolic language of both male fantasies and dominant representations of the nation. Walcott's *Omeros* is not an exception.

Indeed, according to a number of critics, Helen designates an eroticized narrative space that mediates Walcott's vision of Caribbean cultural belonging and originality. Critical assessments of *Omeros*, however, rarely distinguish between Helen, the repository of a myriad of historical and literary meanings, and Helen, the actual, living woman. Yet, making this necessary distinction—a neglect also characteristic of Homer's *Iliad*—helps examine the dynamic relations between female empowerment and disempowerment in Walcott's combined discourses of cultural mimicry and hybrid Caribbean national identity. By comparing Helen's double narrative functions, namely her role as a living woman and her symbolizing of Walcott's island St. Lucia, with those of Achille's canoe, we can illustrate how she generates while critically undermining Walcott's entire discourse on the Caribbean nation. *Omeros* orchestrates the metaphors of Helen and Achille's canoe through continuous and displaced repetitions of names, sounds, and misquotations.

Philoctete opens *Omeros* with a metaphor. Explaining how the fishermen cut down cedars to build their canoes, he tells us, "[t]his is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes" (3). The creolized diction of Philoctete's language situates metaphor in a cross-cultural discourse. It functions as an integral part of St. Lucian patois and overrides the conventional division between poetic and literal language. Philoctete's words also cite two of Walcott's privileged metaphors for the writing process and the poet, namely the tree, and by extension, the canoe, and the carpenter. Inflected with meanings of transformation and circularity, the metaphor of the canoe points toward Walcott's project of an originary Caribbean cultural mimicry. But as soon as the canoe metaphor seems established, its referentiality is disrupted by Achille who names his canoe "*In God We Troust,*" quickly instructing the by-standing priest "'Leave it! Is God' spelling and mine" (8). In Walcott's terminology, as I mentioned earlier, Achille's misspelling suggests an error that undermines a given authority and brings about change through a normative accident.

Now, a performative reading does not contest the destabilizing effects of Achille's misspelling or symbolic abuse of metaphor. In fact, it views the naming of the canoe as an act of cultural agency because the canoe's name cites a common phrase by disidentifying its meaning. More clearly, the phrase "In God We Trust" not only establishes a biblical reference, but also reiterates the inscription of a dollar bill. On the one hand, it indicates the neo-colonial commodification of St. Lucia through American tourism. On the other, the phrase recalls Derrida's notion of the surplus value of metaphor. "In God We Trust," then, presents a political sign by which Achille himself is already constituted within, as Butler's puts it, "a chain [. . .] of significations" (*Bodies* 219) which lack definitive origins. For Achille to have agency depends precisely on being initiated as a subject within these operations of power because they enable him to cite and repeat the phrase "In God We Trust" as a political sign. By naming his canoe "In God We Troust," Achille performs an act of infidelity against the rule of fixed identities and simultaneously conveys a certain complicity with the authority of Christian beliefs. This tension between cultural complicity and disloyalty, however, reveals the phrase's prior normative meanings. It also reflects the fluid properties of Achille's identity and perhaps cautions the reader not to trust Walcott's text unconditionally.

Following Achille's mental journey to Africa, the narrator comments that "each odyssey pivots" not on a battle cry but on a silent motion of memory and poetry, "when a wave rhymes with one's grave, a canoe with a coffin" (159). Both nouns the canoe and the coffin illustrate a parallel, signifying Walcott's complex metaphor of the Meridian, namely the irrevocable incision of cross-cultural encounters. The rhyme and poetic rhythm, however, unify what seems separate, because they echo the multiple displacements of the crossings between Europe, Africa, and Asia. The disparities designate the impediments of history and make it impossible and undesirable, in Walcott's words, " to return to what [one] h[as] never been " ("The Caribbean" 53). Achille's mental journey in the canoe reflects how history can indeed become a "timeless, yet habitable moment." At the same

time, the canoe symbolizes a negative dialectic of history, that is, a process that at once preserves and cancels colonial and Caribbean history without imposing a synthesis of terms. In this way the parallel between "canoe" and "coffin" is crossed and, as the narrator tells us, "the line of master and slave" (159) canceled. Achille, then, is successfully situated in a history that defines but does not claim him. Being cleansed from "[t]he yoke of the wrong name" (247), Achille's quest for cultural roots reaches a cathartic closure and domesticates the restrictive effects of metaphor. More precisely, if the "right journey," as Omeros' narrator says, involves a circular movement which preserves and cancels cultural origins, then this movement also contains the crisis intrinsic in metaphorical constructions of identity. Achille's journey toward a hybrid identity, however, is a silent, motionless journey for, as the narrator puts it, "change lay in our silence" (229). But what, one might ask, constitutes the silence that precedes change?

In *Omeros*, Helen appears to be the most controversial character because her name is completely encumbered with a plethora of mythical, literary, and historical meanings. Both Major Plunkett's and the narrator's desire to give Helen a Caribbean history have added to her symbolic burden. Yet, the narrator recognizes that he and Plunkett committed an act of violence against Helen, the woman and the island, when making her the receptacle of their own visions of history. While the narrator sought to write the "shallows" of a hidden Caribbean history through "impulse," rejecting "any design / that kept to a chart," the Major "tried to change History to a metaphor, / in the name of a housemaid," hoisting Helen's "yellow dress on [his] flagship" of imperial war history. As the narrator concedes, " I in self-defence, / altered her opposite. Yet it was all for her" (270). The narrator clearly acknowledges that the two "opposing stratagems" (271) still move on the same psychological and political grounds, namely on the desire to manifest a history of origins and redemption.

However, his confession of having abused Helen as his poetic muse also reveals the narrator's desire to see Helen as just a woman, "as the sun saw her, with no Homeric

shadow, / swinging her plastic sandals on that beach alone [. . .] Why make the smoke a door?" (271). The reader wonders to whom this question is addressed and what its effects are. As Butler reminds us, "the unmasking of the narrative is its remasking — inevitably" (*Excitable* 77). What are the consequences of writing Helen out of the "smoke" of time, out of history and metaphor? Does Helen eventually embody that "light beyond metaphor" of which it was the narrator's task "to make what [he] wanted of it" (271)?

When the narrator meets Seven Seas, who leads him through a Dantesque inferno of the Caribbean poet's divided consciousness, both characters look back on their island and take the cue for their tale from a "voice / that hummed in the vase of a girl's throat: "Omeros" (13). In fact, the girl's voice belongs to Antigone, a visiting Greek sculptor and, of course, the most politicized and rebellious woman in Sophocles' tragedies. Crying out "O-meros [. . .] [t]hat's what we call him in Greek" (14), she names the poem's project of translation and Walcott's vision of Adamic naming. But once the narrator meets Omeros, the name of the girl becomes insignificant. Omeros prefers to associate the girl with Helen who "was nothing" but "an epic's excuse" (284). While he remembers "Helen's / smell. The sun on her flesh" (284), the narrator recalls that it was the name "in [the girl's] throat's white vase" that "sent him to find" the ancient poet. After all, Omeros concludes, "[a] girl smells better than the world's libraries" (284).

In the encounter of the two poets, then, Helen has been removed from the literary and historical chains of meaning that would secure her social and cultural position as a subject. Her symbolic function as a political sign is literally naturalized and returned to what Derrida calls an "original figure, always sensible and material." This figure, we recall, is "not exactly a metaphor" ("White" 8) but a conceptual prerequisite of metaphor. Helen, who refuses to spend "change on transport" (34) and thus symbolically denies her metaphorical status, resembles the sea's "wide page without metaphors." Helen's pregnancy further amplifies her association with the sea which in Antillean patois translates into mother. Yet, the sea and, thus, Helen provide the narrator's and Omeros's "last

resort" (296). Being symbolically stripped of her various meanings, Helen is positioned outside the operations of power and metaphor. She has been simplified by history. In contrast to Achille's purification from history, Helen's is not productive but normative. As a lexical fragment and patois noun, she resides within the boundaries of Omeros' name.

The normative effect of Helen's removed position points to the existence of a natural, power-free narrative space. More clearly, power produces gaps or silences which seem to be untranslatable and yet regulate what can and cannot be articulated. Being an effect of power, these gaps safeguard the normative operations of power and simultaneously foreground the inherent instability of power. What is foreclosed or appears to be unspeakable in the operations of power is precisely the process through which power legitimates itself. If Walcott's text assigns Helen a position outside of metaphor, then this position not only generates Walcott's notion of a fragmented Antillean identity but also makes it legible. Helen, we remember, is associated with the girl's "throat's white vase" (284). Hence, she clearly reiterates the task of the Caribbean poet to reassemble, as Walcott puts it in his Nobel Prize speech, the broken "African and Asiatic fragments" of history's "vase," whose "restoration shows its white scars" (Antilles).

Helen's marginalized yet constitutive role in Omeros emerges more notably in a cross-dressing scene with Achille and in her subsequent elevation to a "fine local woman" (322). On Boxing Day the village celebrates "the day of fifes" (273), a carnivalesque procession with limbo dancers and "stilt-strider[s]" (273). Achille dresses as "a warrior-woman." The scene dramatizes what Walcott calls the Caribbean "carnival mentality" which "solemnly [. . .] dedicates itself to the concept of waste" ("The Caribbean" 55) and its perpetual renewal. It also enacts a form of "camouflage" and mimicry that serves as "defense and lure" (55). For the occasion Achille wears Helen's yellow dress that both marks her as a threat to the established social order and reflects her independence and sexual difference. Helen does not participate in the procession. Instead, she helps Achille to get dressed and "everything she did was serious" (275). Through the exchange of the dress

both characters melt into one another so that Achille stands in "the mirror/ of [Helen's] pride and her butterfly-quiet kisses" (276). At first glance, Achille's transformation seems emancipatory, for it dramatizes his own projection of Helen and a transgression of gender boundaries. Yet, we also observe that the image of the butterfly—the crucial mark of mimicry and, according to Walcott, of agency—has been transferred from Helen to Achille. He and Philoctete have now become "androgynous warriors" (276), neutralizing the question of gender difference altogether and reenacting the pain and memory of the past through a rite of passage.

Helen's decentered position during the carnival procession and the surrender of her dress evoke Walcott's notion of a hybrid identity. In "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry" he argues that having a culturally mixed heritage "is an ambiguity without a crisis" (51). In other sections of *Omeros*, the dress circulates as a political and sexual sign of difference, because Helen either got it or stole it from Maud so that she changed from "maid" to "mistress" and, in the eyes of Plunkett, "destroy[ed] / her own possibilities" (64). This change clearly foregrounds the social and political functions of the dress as a metaphor of Helen's identity. To Helen, the dress serves as an act of cultural cross-dressing that stresses the artificial construction of her cultural and gender identity. The dress further implies what Marjorie Garber sees as the most auspicious effect of cross-dressing, namely a "'category crisis'" which "disrupt[s] and call[s] attention to cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances" (16). These disparities of cultural and historical belonging are certainly played out in the individual quests of the male characters in *Omeros*. Helen's agency, however, vanishes when her dress becomes the necessary stage-prop for Achille's ritual purification. The cultural ambiguities inherent in the symbolic functions of Helen's dress are synthesized in a dramatic act of catharsis, an act, which, in Garber's words, reflects the "possibility [of] structuring and confounding culture" (17) through a female performance. Helen's position, then, generates and safeguards a normative discourse of gender and cultural

hybridity. Through the surrender of her dress, she is symbolically forced into representing "an ambiguity without a crisis" (Walcott, "The Caribbean 51).

In the last book of *Omeros* the metaphor of Helen as a national icon has turned on its own axis. Indeed, as a metaphor, she has returned, according to the narrator, to the "port" from which she "must start" (291). If her port of departure was Plunkett's and the narrator's desire to wrest her away from colonial history, her port of destination is a cross-cultural identity in which "the mirror of History / has melted and [. . .] a patient, hybrid organism / grows" (297). Walcott's metaphors, as I showed earlier, are as poetically seductive as they are complex. With regard to Walcott's construction of gender, the melted mirror implies the vanishing of alienating and imposed self-projections that facilitate an infinite yet cohesive process of identity formation. Referring to the self-sufficient and self-reproductive properties of coral, the metaphor of this hybrid organism unwittingly returns the notion of hybridity to a biological domain with, as Robert Young argues, an inevitably heterosexual, or, with view to Helen's sexual practices, autoerotic agenda. As the chains of historical and political meanings melt in *Omeros*, Helen disappears from the stages of history and is redefined in the name of a procreative cultural mimicry. To Achille, for example, Helen still presents both the island and the woman who moves "under him" (301). To Plunkett she signifies "only a name / for a local wonder" (309). Whatever force the metaphor of Helen had politically and historically, this power has been effectively dissolved. But more importantly, like Achille's canoe, Helen has finally turned into a phenomenon that we cannot translate into something definite.

Altered from "maid" to "mistress" to waitress, Helen once more serves tourists. She is pregnant with Hector's child but refuses to give the child, as Achille suggests, an African name. "[H]olding a tray / over her stomach to hide the wave-rounded sigh / of her pregnancy," Helen radiates a "remote [. . .] stillness." Her face resembles "an ebony carving" (322) that the tourists fail to read. With her "feline smile of a pregnant woman" (318), she has become a "fine local woman" (322). Thus, as a metaphor for Walcott's

notion of an Antillean identity, Helen has been fully translated into a feminized rhetoric of the nation: her grace and her insistence on naming the unborn child reflect the ways in which mimicry, in Walcott's words, creates the "existence and accidents of natural elements" ("The Caribbean" 56). In her mask-like face we can read Walcott's dictum that "history, taught as action, is art" (57); in her pregnancy we hear Walcott's "sigh of human optimism" (57). However, this "belief in possibility" (57), in perpetual renewal requires a normative exclusion of women from the narrative of the nation.

The two metaphors of Helen and Achille's canoe, then, operate as discursive sites of power production in Walcott's text. While the canoe metaphor provides Achille with social agency and intervenes into the binary operations of metaphor, Helen's construction as a normative and apparently untranslatable narrative space ultimately disempowers and depoliticizes her. Although Walcott's project of divesting colonial metaphors of their overdetermined and oppressive effects designates a crucial postcolonial narrative strategy, the national and masculinist undercurrents of this project clearly risk a metaphysical detour of metaphor toward dialectical closure. *Omeros*, I suggest, articulates cultural and gender difference as a marker of exclusion and simultaneously domesticates and homogenizes this difference through the several cathartic experiences of its male characters. In this position, Helen or the Polish waitress serve as vehicles for Walcott's poetic vision while being reconfigured as either the symbol or limit of the nation. What Walcott perceives as a necessary simplification of history, then, can easily turn into a reduction of cultural differences in his narrative of the Caribbean nation. In this sense, Walcott's generic choice of the epic falls back onto its Western origins of dominant nation narration.

Chapter 8

Austin Clarke's *The Origin of Waves* : Translating Origins and Performative Metaphors

> They took us on tours around the Map of the World, and laid the foundation
> for our desperate determination to leave the small island-country, the rock
> on which much of the rumour and ritual of our existence was founded.
>
> Austin Clarke, *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack.* (70)

Unlike Derek Walcott, Austin Clarke left the Caribbean in 1955 to make Canada his permanent home as a writer, journalist, politician, and university lecturer. In 1968 he comments that he "'had come as an immigrant seeking everything. Canada was the perfect choice'" (Clarke qtd. in Algoo-Baksh 33). In contrast to the narrator's conviction of an inevitable return home to the Caribbean in *Omeros*, Clarke emphasizes that Canada was the right place to immigrate to. The passage quoted from *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack*, Clarke's memories of his Caribbean childhood and adolescence years, indicates that Clarke's work mediates ideas of home, migration, and identity through a discursive perspective of colonialism and cultural representation. Barbados appears to be a hardly visible speck on the then colonial "Map of the World." Similar to Joseph's articulations of cultural identity in *The Intended*, Clarke's description of Barbados as an exotic yet colonially dependent Caribbean island generates identity as an unstable concept based on "rumour and ritual." In Clarke's work, however, the instability of cultural identity is not restricted to the experience of migration. Instead, it is contiguous with growing up in Barbados, in a society whose educational, political, and cultural institutions have been shaped by colonialism.

As with many other Caribbean writers of his generation, Clarke left Barbados to escape its parochial class hierarchies and imposed colonial values. Yet, if, in 1950, the year in which Clarke's *Growing Up Stupid* ends, the colonial world seemed narrow on the island, this world was also in a state of dissolution and open to an exploration in reverse. In contrast to *Omeros's* Homeric journey home to a place of original cultural belonging,

Growing Up Stupid concludes with the narrator's desire to leave his Caribbean birthplace. Interestingly enough, the narrator of *Growing Up Stupid* expresses his desire to leave the Caribbean by quoting a text of classical epic writing: "I thought only of Sleepy Smith and his sombre voice in the translation of Vergil, *The Aeneid*, Book One: '*I sing of arms and a hero, who first sailed from the shores of Troy . . .*'"(192). Rather then recalling a Homeric epic of homecoming, the narrator remembers an epic of new beginnings after defeat and conquest. His memory of *The Aeneid* brings together two competing reference systems. First, it cites translations of canonized European texts as a staple exercise of a restrictive and alienating colonial education system. Second, in the context of migration, the emphasis on translation foreshadows that identity formation processes are bound to narratives of cultural contamination. By quoting Virgil's *Aeneid*, instead of Homer's *Odyssey*, Clarke's *Growing Up Stupid* symbolically points at such characteristic themes of Clarke's later work as the rewriting of received notions of national belonging, the formation of interracial relationships and cross-cultural identity. In Clarke's recent novel *The Origin of Waves*, "*sail[ing] from the shores*" of Barbados does not imply a fall from cultural originality. Instead, it provides the occasion to investigate the psychological and political dynamics of migration from the different perspectives of two Barbadian men.

The opening scene of *The Origin of Waves* takes the reader into a childhood memory of Tim, the novel's narrator. He remembers the time he spent with his friend John at a beach of their native Barbados, watching the waves rising and withdrawing. In their repetitive movement, the waves wash ashore a conch-shell and an old and patched inner tube of a truck, the boys' floating toy. At the beach the two friends contemplate their first and shared love, their fears to drown in the sea, as so many fishermen and relatives have done. As a medium of transportation the sea also carries the boys' hopes to leave the island and its persisting shadow of colonialism for a more promising future in the USA or Canada. Though John and Tim immigrate to both countries respectively, their hopes for

success and self-realization remain ambivalently unfulfilled. During an unexpected meeting in Toronto after forty-five years of lost contact, both men have to face "the hurtful memory of those glorious, happy days" (32).

They retell the events of their past and become the readers and writers of their own life-stories. John invents a tale of immigrant success and adventure. Having exploited the racist system of the southern US to his advantage, he now pretends to work as a successful psychoanalyst and to be the proud father of a large number of children as a result of his various intercultural marriages. In Tim's eyes John acts like a "Black Muslim" and poses as a self-professed "Amurcan-black" from the deep South, a "black Dixiecrack" (72) who never "was a brave man" (229). Tim, in contrast, leads a life of self-beratement, isolation, and frustration caused by his failed relationship with the Chinese woman Lang. Haunted by her memory and a traumatizing sense of guilt and failure, Tim lives in his idealized memories of the past. Having stopped working years ago, he now spends his time either killing ants with a can of Black Flag in the garden of his Rosedale house or walking through the streets of Toronto. His walks are ambiguous on two accounts. First, they have "no destination" (14) yet repeatedly lead him to the shores of Lake Ontario, where he searches for the Caribbean beaches of his childhood and finally contemplates suicide. Second, his walks symbolically recall Ralph Ellison's notion of black social and cultural invisibility while asserting Tim's visible presence in the streets of Toronto. Unable to explore how the dominant politics of race and cultural difference shape his social and psychic constitution, he dissociates himself from Toronto's multicultural life. "Work is for immigrants," he says, and "I was never an immigrant" (34). He compares himself to a "walking sail old and worn and tattered" (14). Toronto's urban life and the snow remind him of the movement of waves frozen in time. Clinging to an essentialist vision of cultural identity, Tim negates the last forty years of his Canadian life and remains storm-tossed in "this tormenting time of indecision: home or here; sun or snow" (22).

To a certain extent, Tim's distorted memory of Lang, a law student whom he met when he was a student at Trinity college, structures the narrative of the novel. Although the relationship between Tim and Lang must have ended more than forty years prior to Tim's meeting with John, Tim clings to the memory of his Trinity time and his two or three months long love relation with Lang as the happiest time he had in Canada. The various versions of his relationship with Lang that Tim conveys keep both John and the reader unclear as to whether Lang actually physically died or became lost as an object of Tim's love. In Tim's guilty imagination the turning point of his relationship with Lang occurs when he does not answer a telephone call because he has isolated himself in his garden to kill black ants with a spray can of Black Flag. He assumes that the caller is Lang and later interprets his failure to answer the call as a failure to save Lang's life. The guilt Tim generates correlates with a similar feeling of failure he experienced when he was a boy and unable to swim into the sea to rescue the inner tube. Each account of Lang, however, is punctuated by and connected with metaphors that originate in Tim's Caribbean past. Tim's narratives of loss and memory suggest, as the opening scene of the novel does, that the psychological configuration of the novel's characters is marked by a nostalgia which keeps them locked between the desire of return and an aggressive need to foster old wounds.

Both men's narratives, however, are frequently interrupted by the recurrence of the conch-shell and inner tube metaphor which, like the waves, recoil from and re-enter into Tim's and John's narratives. In Tim's memory the conch-shell signals a loss of speech that is linked to his fear of poverty and his apparently lost love to Lang. As a marker of repression in Tim's psychic life the conch-shell determines the gaps and twists in Tim's narrative. The novel's rhetorical movements of withdrawal and doubling also figure in the structure of Tim's and John's dialogue because both characters advance life-stories based on fantasies of cultural authenticity and originality from which they eventually retreat through a repeated telling of their stories. Characterized by motions of withdrawal, dissolution, and return, the symbolism of the conch-shell, the waves, and snow provides a

theoretical intersection of psychoanalysis, performativity, and metaphor that both shifts the novel's apparent focus of nostalgia to melancholia and contests misconceived notions of cultural originality.

Further, the metaphorical orchestration of *The Origin of Waves* suggests a link to Clarke's unpublished novel manuscript *An American Dutchman*. Both texts employ similar metaphors and develop a critique of cultural essentialism as a restrictive concept of identity based on practices of cultural and racial exclusion. If postcolonial texts frequently engage in rewriting canonized Western texts from a culturally marginalized perspective, *The Origin of Waves* revisits and rewrites a part of Clarke's own history as a Caribbean-Canadian writer. In contrast to the often problematic centrality of canonized texts as the dominant frame of reference in postcolonial rewritings of history, the centrality of Clarke's unpublished manuscript is immediately put into question as the access to this text is limited. In contrast to Walcott's adaptation of the modern verse epic, Clarke's return to one of his earlier texts does not attempt to write a narrative of original national belonging. Instead, it traces the ways in which cultural differences are at once historically situated and shaped by individual experiences. To read *The Origin of Waves* together with and against *An American Dutchman* helps illustrate how *The Origin of Waves* employs metaphors performatively to produce generic ambiguities. Moreover, a performative reading of the novel's metaphors of the waves, the conch-shell, the snow, and the inner tube questions dominant theoretical conceptualizations of metaphor in the discourse of ethnic Canadian writing by examining the ways in which one is interpellated as "ethnic."

Translating Origins: Generic Ambiguities in "An American Dutchman" and The Origin of Waves

In the introduction to his collection of short stories *Nine Men Who Laughed*, Austin Clarke calls for a "rhetoric" (6) which does not reduce cultural identities to "colour

or the branded status of 'immigrant'" (7). This request cautions literary theorists and critics not to collapse the various narrative modes, themes, and expressive traditions of postcolonial texts into a homogeneously labeled literature of retribution and victimization. In order to do justice to the aesthetic and cultural particularities of these texts, to paraphrase Anthony Appiah, we must attend to the specific biographies and histories, social and political agendas of their writers. Instead of "writing back" to the colonial center, many contemporary postcolonial writers engage with the narrative strategies and themes of texts written during the period of colonial independence and black civil rights activism. For example, Patrick Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco* engages with Aimé Césaire's long poem "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal" to explore Martinique's history of creolization as well as liberation movements other than those led by Césaire during Martinique's period of independence. These "postrealist" narratives, as Appiah calls them, neither "authorize [. . .] present power" ("Postmodernism" 354) relations nor project a "sentimentalized past" of pure cultural origins.

Instead, postrealist narratives operate through generically hybrid narratives in order to contest and denaturalize what earlier realist narratives sought to enshrine or obscure, namely nationalist representations of identity based exclusively on race and place. Postrealism, as I understand Appiah, suggests a form of writing that criticizes both "[p]ostcoloniality [as] a condition of pessimism" ("Postcolonial" 438) and postmodern commodifications of cultural artifacts as fetishes of Otherness and cultural authenticity. Postrealist narratives, then, delegitimize earlier master narratives of the nation and cultural identity while acknowledging historical contingencies and subaltern suffering. In this context, we may say that postrealist narratives negotiate the cultural and historical grounds from which claims to such universal ideas as humanism are made. By rearticulating these grounds the idea of the universal itself undergoes a process of cultural translation that prevents closure and makes the universal a politically contested sign. If structuralists like Jakobson define metaphor as a master trope of realist narratives, in postrealist narratives

metaphors maintain a crucial but critical rhetorical position: they contest rather than claim their conventional function of imposing a synthesis of contradictions and binary identity patterns.

Austin Clarke's unpublished manuscript *An American Dutchman* and *The Origin of Waves* exemplify a postrealist writing practice. Clarke's texts operate together as a radical critique of how nativist and race-based notions of identity constrain the individual's choices for multiple cultural and national identifications. In both texts, the similarities between wave- and insect-metaphors imply that *An American Dutchman* can be read as a silent intertext in *The Origin of Waves*. To read *The Origin of Waves* through *An American Dutchman* has at least two advantages. First, it undertakes a historical genealogy of Clarke's recent novel that engages the writer as the reader and translator of his own autobiographical musings. Second, if *An American Dutchman* largely adheres to realist narrative conventions, *The Origin of Waves* employs a postrealist narrative by citing and denaturalizing the normative effects of the earlier manuscript's prominent metaphors.

According to my research at the Austin Clarke-archive at McMaster University, Clarke first conceptualized *An American Dutchman* in 1969. In its initial form, the text was drafted as a long literary essay entitled "An American Dutchman. A Personal View of the US Poet LeRoi Jones's Perception of America in the 1960's." Clarke eventually worked the essay into a novel manuscript in 1987, which he revised again in 1990. Although Clarke did not find a publisher for the ms, he included, as Stella Algoo-Baksh points out, a "not inconsiderable amount of 'worked-over' material" (179) from the ms in his 1992 short story collection *In This City*. Considering the thematic and structural contiguity of *An American Dutchman* and *The Origin of Waves*, it seems likely that Clarke continued to revise older material for *The Origin of Waves*.

Thematically both texts explore how the Caribbean experience of migration either to the US or to Canada effects distinct political and cultural identifications. *An American*

Dutchman presents a thinly hidden autobiographical account of Clarke's six-week teaching appointment at Indiana University in the summer of 1969. Set in the US South at the peak of the African American Black Power movement, *An America Dutchman* casts a critical eye on LeRoi Jones' play *Dutchman* to articulate the historical and political contradictions a Caribbean-Canadian professor faces in his struggle for cultural belonging. *The Origin of Waves* dramatizes the historically and psychologically heterogeneous positions two Barbadian men, Tim and John, both occupy and defy in the course of their lives as immigrants in Canada and the USA respectively. Both texts trace the ways in which black cultural identifications at once cut across national borders and generate specific national discourses.

While *The Origin of Waves* is structured through a performative repetition of Tim's and John's stories and plays with what Tim calls "comma-," rather than common, "sense" (20), the narrative of *An American Dutchman* is chronologically organized. The manuscript's third-person narrative purports to give a realist and objective account of Professor C.A. Downes' teaching experience in both Yale and Bloomington. The anagrammatic representation of Clarke's name in Downes' initials, however, contests realist conventions by inflecting the ms with Clarke's autobiographical signature. Further, the realist narrative is frequently interrupted by stream of consciousness fragments that orchestrate both Downes' ambivalent cultural position in the South and the manuscript's theme of racially defined sanity and insanity. Like *The Origin of Waves*, *An American Dutchman* presents three protagonists who occupy distinct yet politically intersecting positions. In the manuscript we encounter Downes, who, like Tim in *The Origin of Waves*, is "a Canadian [. . .] born in the West Indies" (2) and at odds with his multiple cultural legacies. Second, we meet Calvin, a black student activist whose clamorous and contradictory character prefigures John's boisterous behavior in *The Origin of Waves*. Third, both texts employ female characters, Lang and Lee respectively, who are largely

absent from the plot of both narratives since Tim and Downes reject interracial relationships. The melancholic longing for Lee and Lang, however, persistently disrupts Downes' and Tim's narrative of uncontaminated cultural origins and foregrounds the men's entrapment in their own internalized racial stereotypes.

From the start, Downes welcomes his short-term teaching appointment in Bloomington because it offers him the opportunity to escape what he considers a socially illicit love affair with a white French-Canadian woman who has Iroquois ancestors and is married to a white Haitian refugee. Downes' flight to the US American South signals his desire to keep personal and political conflicts neatly separated in order to preserve his culturally homogeneous and protected identity as a black Yale intellectual. Only when he realizes that the violently segregated South assigns him a reductive social and historical identity according to his skin pigmentation is Downes forced to locate his own cultural position. Being a black foreigner and part of a dominantly white academic establishment, he remains an outsider on both sides of the racial divide and finds himself in the position of the dutchman or native informant in both camps. Instead of enabling subversive strategies of postcolonial mimicry, this position reinforces race-based configurations of identity. Furthermore, becoming an American dutchman also presupposes Downes' own prior constructions of race as a negative category of identification.

In his view blackness carries the oppressive quality of an imposed collective identity which the narrative symbolizes in its recurrent metaphors of flies. "To him, [a] simple fly meant resentment and shame" (1-2) and the touch of a fly feels "like a heavy declaration, something similar to poor relatives acknowledging, with loud smiles and friendly pats, the familiarity of blood" (2). In its exclusivity, this Naipaulesque denial of a partly shared history of oppression and violence reproduces the binary force of race-determined notions of blackness. Downes' disavowal emerges from his prior construction of blackness as skin color and is guided by a fear of undifferentiated consanguinity. By

articulating race in biological terms, Downes conforms to the segregation policies of the South and reduces Southern blacks to a uniform mass.

The Origin of Waves transposes the metaphorical significance of flies into the repeated metaphor of black wood-ants. Tim's obsession with killing ants initially derives from a feeling of racial resentment similar to that Downes associates with flies. However, the normative and essentialist notions of race Downes and Tim identify with insects lose their sway through the performative narrative of *The Origin of Waves*. More specifically, Tim repeatedly cites his act of killing ants and interprets it either as a Freudian symptom for his guilt of having failed Lang or as an aggressive compensation for having to live in a "vacuum of making choices" (129). Interestingly enough, the ants also signal Tim's decision to stop working after an injury. While he refuses to specify this injury, he emphasizes that it was not "a physical injury" but one "that never heals" (204). The simultaneous memory of this incident and of ants passing him "in armies" (204) recalls Derek Walcott's metaphor of ants. In *Omeros*, ants refer to the forgotten black female coal miners who not only left the Caribbean poet an epic legacy but are also associated with the coal-coloured eyes of the Polish waitress (211). In *The Origin of Waves*, then, the various repetitions and intertextual references of the ant-metaphor denaturalize essentialist notions of race and underscore a history of Caribbean migration and survival. At the same time, the ant-metaphor points at a number of lost referents that mark Tim's injury as a silent narrative gap in *The Origin of Waves*.

If *An American Dutchman* depicts a silent intertext of *The Origin of Waves*, Tim's injury has a past history in Downes' experience of cultural disconnection and its painful psychological effects. Like Tim, who considers himself to be an exiled observer of the Canadian multicultural landscape, Downes comes to the South as a tourist of cultures, wanting to " to taste the blood of history and slavery, but none of this was exposed to him" (*American* 90). Instead, he finds a "sad mad landscape," branded by "extreme love and

extreme hate" ("American" 13) which he sees reflected in Calvin's manichaean Black Power rhetoric. The totalizing and violent implications of "this [. . .] new language [. . .] make[Downes] into a foreigner" (*American* 52). In 1969 Clarke describes this cultural divide between him and "the black Americans, [. . .] their psyche, and even an absence [. . .] of roots" as a not at all pleasant experience of "exile" ("American" 176). Yet, in both texts, the ms and *The Origin of Waves*, the resistance to the isolating effects of cultural disconnection demands that cultural differences be acknowledged and employed in productive and inclusive ways.

Although Downes is repelled by Calvin's advocacy of racial seclusion, he slowly realizes that his own rejection of race as a cultural sign prevents him from understanding what is new and powerful in Calvin's language of black consciousness. However, Calvin's totalizing rhetoric falls apart through the physical and semantic excess inherent in his use of language. Like John's communicative practices in *The Origin of Waves*, Calvin's expressions are often theatrical, engaged in jiving, role playing, mimicry, cursing, and masking. For instance, Calvin's mispronunciation of black aesthetics as "Black Esstetics" (*American* 123) foreshadows Tim's and John's catachrestic use of language. In other words, to corrupt metaphors, use puns, or misspell words disrupts the illusion of a stable metaphorical reference system and makes any claim for an original or "true" meaning obsolete. In fact, these linguistic operations facilitate performative identity formations which are founded on mixed cultural origins. Dressed in a black dashiki under which he wears the "university jersey with Indiana in white" (99), Calvin poses as Shakespeare's *Othello*. Rather than complying to the rigid stereotypes of a designated African American identity, Calvin's *Othello* performance enacts fluid cultural identifications and strikes Downes as a revealing act of "protean grandeur" (129).

The performative effect of Calvin's language does not derive from a clearly delineated political strategy but from what LeRoi Jones sees as the indelible contradictions

between racialized sanity and insanity. In his two-act play *Dutchman* (1964), LeRoi Jones

pits Lula, a frivolous white woman, against Clay Clay Williams, an educated, middle-

class, black youth and stereotypical "dutchman." At the end of the play Lula kills Clay,

signaling that Clays convictions of non-violent resistance and self-definition cannot end

racist violence and oppression. In his final rebuttal, however, Clay articulates blackness in

psychological and cultural rather than in racial terms. Black people, he says, are

> neurotics, struggling to keep from being sane. And the only thing that
> would cure the neurosis would be your murder. [. . .] If Bessie Smith had
> killed some white people she wouldn't have needed that music. She could
> have talked very straight and plain about the world. No metaphors. [. . .]
> All of them. Crazy niggers turning their back on sanity. When all it needs is
> that simple act. Murder. [. . .] Would make us all sane. [. . .] I'd rather be a
> fool. Insane. (35)

Clay's notion of insanity as an interventive act into presumably natural and given sets of

referentiality and meaning corresponds to what Tim in *The Origin of Waves* calls "comma

sense" (20). Yet. Clay's articulation of insanity does not aestheticize violence but rather

takes it to be the bitter source for new cultural expressions.

The predicament of how to live with this "insanity" seems most pronounced in the

different solutions Clarke suggests first in *An American Dutchman* and then in *The Origin*

of Waves. The manuscript's critique of Jones' play provides a reversal of characters so that

the dutchman, Downes, survives and the black power activist, Calvin, is killed in a

demonstration. In *The Origin of Waves* the argument is more complex, because Tim's

suicidal tendencies and his obsession to kill ants illustrate his struggle to conform to a

normative white society. For Tim to be sane ultimately means to reproduce and auto-direct

the violence inherent in processes of cultural assimilation.

In *An American Dutchman*, however, Calvin's rhetoric and his tragic death

compels Downes to confront the violent history of racism and its effects. Turning the

madness and aggression of cultural and psychological misrecognition against himself, he

rages in his bathroom, smashes a mirror and rips off his pajamas "[f]rom the crotch, as if

he was performing a lynching on himself" (236). Downes finally recognizes that the violent

history he shares with the South does not consist in the act of lynching itself but in reductive representations of blackness that underlie and enable lynchings. In *The Origin of Waves* it is precisely this form of representational violence that punctuates Tim's history and accounts for his unspeakable injury. He remarks that the British education system in Barbados installed racist self-loathing in the native students when the "Combermere School for Boys [. . .] made us see ourselves as colonials" (19). While *An American Dutchman* configures race as an oppressive category to be dissolved through the acts of a self-conscious subject, in *The Origin of Waves* race is produced by both normative and empowering forms of social address.

In *An American Dutchman*, Downes' ritual passing through the distorted mirror images of racial violence enables him to make cross-cultural connections. He realizes that in the "South" he found "a part of Barbados [. . .] a part of [his] psychic being." Back in Yale, he feels, like Tim, "suspended, timeless, and at once waiting upon time" (56). Downes contemplates where water comes from. Yet,

> all he knows is that the water comes from water; and beach and sea water will have to settle for waves of green leaves in the tall old trees surrounding Yale to grow, trees that hide a different taint of history, not much different from the trees in Barbados, and water not much different from that contained in the waves of his beach and sea. Here at Yale, trees may have been used to hang men and women. [. . .] There in Barbados, the sea and the waves have been the graves of slaves, of seamen, fugitives and pirates. (75-76)

While the wave-metaphors establish Downes' cultural displacement as a Caribbean man, they also operate as a historicizing signifier of what Clarke calls "the geography of time" ("American" 30), namely the intersections of the various histories of slavery, migration, and racism. For Downes the decisive moment of self-recognition occurs when the black woman Mary-Anne tells him that "you may be like a ship in strange waters, drifting 'bout, but it don't mean that nobody else in the same sea with you! Don't mean you inhabiting the

sea all alone by yourself. We who know the sea better gotta notice a strange sail on the horizon" (*American* 224). Here the metaphors of the sea, the waves, and the sail foreshadow the figurative orchestration of *The Origin of Waves*. At the same time, they delineate the infinite and performative rehearsal of cultural identifications.

In an article written in 1971 and thus predating postcolonial debates of performativity, Clarke anticipates that identity is something that a person "gives to himself, and which is acknowledged by persons other than himself, as the identity which he has given himself" ("One Way" 11). But who acknowledges and recognizes this identity? In both *An American Dutchman* and *The Origin of Waves*, Downes and Tim transfer this task to women. But neither Lee nor Lang accepts the burden of saving a misconceived male identity in the face of "cultural indecision" to which they are themselves subjected. In fact, at the end of *An American Dutchman*, Downes returns to Yale to find that Lee has left him. Bereft of the possibility of being redeemed by her, Downes realizes that his desire for cultural purity barred him from seeing Lee in all her human and cultural complexity. *An American Dutchman*, then, ends where *The Origin of Waves* begins. Like Tim, Downes wanders around aimlessly, "not know[ing] how long he would have to walk; and he did not know the exact route he had to take" (333).

Reading *An American Dutchman* as a silent intertext of *The Origin of Waves* helps establish a textual and historical genealogy of Clarke's writing. *The Origin of Waves* reworks the largely realist narrative of *An American Dutchman* in postrealist terms by questioning the manuscript's tendency to construct a normative or essentialist cultural identity. While *An American Dutchman* employs wave- and insect-metaphors to achieve a dialectical resolution of the effects of cultural displacement and racist violence, *The Origin of Waves* repeats and cites these metaphors to stress the inevitable heterogeneity of cultural origins. Yet, the novel's narrative forms of role playing, masking, repetition, and misquotation pay homage to Calvin's performative rhetoric and thus to African American

expressive traditions. Read together, *The Origin of Waves* and *An American Dutchman* generate a syntax of cross-cultural and transnational separations and conjunctions. Indeed, together both of Clarke's texts dramatize what Rinaldo Walcott terms a "Grammar for Black" (133) or John, in *The Origin of Waves*, calls a "crossing-over" (149): they enact a permanent transgression of literary and figurative conventions, of cultural origins and national identifications.

To a certain extent, reading Clarke's two texts together questions dominant critical assessments of ethnic writing. Considering that Clarke drafted *An American Dutchman* as early as 1969, the manuscript documents a history of ethnic Canadian writing that questions the effectiveness of what Arun Mukherjee terms an "oppositional aesthetics" of ethnic writing. Rather, the ways in which *An American Dutchman* exposes the pitfalls of purist concepts of cultural identity anticipate such influential identity theories as Diana Brydon's concept of cultural contamination[80] and Bhabha's notion of cultural difference. With its attempts to distinguish a Caribbean-Canadian from an African American position, Clarke's early novel manuscript participates in and simultaneously puts a disclaimer to the then mainstream practices of postulating a thematic and systematized tradition of Canadian literature.[81] By incorporating autobiographical fragments into *An American Dutchman* and then translating these fragments into *The Origin of the Waves*, Clarke becomes the protagonist, reader, and writer of his own texts. The various textual transpositions that make up *The Origin of Waves* trace the multiple cultural displacements that characterize Clarke's notion of Caribbean-Canadian history. Thus, the claim to authenticity and ethnic "authoritativeness" (Lorrigio 55) diminishes considerably.

Reading both texts as being interwoven with each other articulates ethnicity as an act of enunciation. This act always posits a split and fragmented subject which "destroys the logics of synchronicity and evolution which traditionally authorize the subject of cultural knowledge" (Bhabha, *Location* 36). If we accept that the subject and its condition

of speech is split and not fully knowledgeable, as the intersections between Clarke's texts suggest, then it seems difficult to single out a "social identity" of the ethnic writer which then "attests [. . .] [the] authenticity" (Lorrigio 55) of his or her texts. If Walcott's *Omeros* projects a vision of cultural hybridity as an authentic condition of the Caribbean nation, Clarke's texts examine different experiences of exile without conflating them into a single narrative of dispossession. Instead, by citing the organizing metaphors of *An American Dutchman* in *The Origin of Waves*, the latter novel attempts to map a culturally connecting yet deessentializing "geography of time." In their new and displaced narrative context, however, the metaphors of the waves and insects function performatively. Elaborated through a Canadian setting and various other cultural connotations, these metaphors, on the one hand, turn their prior claim to identity into catachresis and demystify desires for cultural authenticity. On the other, they invite a critique of dominant theoretical readings of metaphor in the context of ethnic Canadian writing.

The Conch-Shell, the Inner Tube, and Lang: Performativity, Melancholy, and Metaphor in Ethnic Canadian Literary Criticism

As a trope of power, metaphor names, designates, and produces memory to compel reductive and homogeneous identities. Metaphors interpellate, to recall Butler, "subjects in subjection" (*Excitable* 34). More specifically, by hailing and classifying somebody as ethnic, metaphor serves to constitute and naturalize a cultural norm at whose margins the "ethnic" appears as the cultural Other. Yet, it is precisely from the social and political position assigned through an act of naming that it becomes possible to generate agency because repeated acts of interpellation produce the subject's social and cultural position. In Clarke's novel, the metaphor of the conch-shell and the inner tube indicate how Tim's identity is produced historically through exile and migration and marks his liminal and defying social position within Canada's multicultural mosaic. Performative metaphors negotiate the ways in which agency emerges from within the constraints of power, not by

merging into or mimicking the structures of power, but by reiterating and disidentifying their operative modes and effects. For example, the conch-shell implies speechlessness as the normative condition of Tim's life. Yet, the constant return of this metaphor in Tim's memory also exposes practices of social and cultural containment that construct loss as being untranslatable. In other words, while the conch-shell signifies a normative configuration of cultural Otherness in Tim's psychic life, its constant reiteration in Clarke's novel undermines the binary concepts that govern the production of cultural Otherness.

The conch-shell first appears as a stranded object on the Barbadian beach where Tim and John meet as children and occupies the position of a silent participant in the boys' conversations. Subsequently triggering both the narrative and the memories of the narrator, the conch-shell functions as the novel's metaphorical marker and carrier of Caribbean history, which, to use Brathwaite's term, is "submarine." In the discourse of Caribbean history and literature the sea signifies the absence of an empirical archive of historical data and designates both a history of loss and relation marked by the Middle Passage and the slave trade. It points toward the construction of a Caribbean national identity based on cultural and racial hybridity. In Tim's memory as well as in a wider discourse of Caribbean history the conch-shell already carries the normative traits of an imagined cultural belonging and originality. In the Western literary imagination the conch-shell also recalls the ways in which it regulates speech and operates as a colonial signifier in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In the Caribbean setting of Tim's childhood, however, the conch-shell cannot be linked to one singular cultural origin. The exoticizing and authenticating connotations and effects of the conch-shell, that retrospectively turn Tim's childhood and cultural origins into an idealized past, only emerge once Tim migrates to Canada.

Symbolically speaking, the process of migration is also a metaphorical movement of displacement and idealization. From the beginning of Clarke's novel, the conch-shell does not fully comply to an essentialist notion of cultural belonging. On the contrary, being itself displaced on the beach, the conch assumes a liminal position, emphasising borders

and spaces of inbetweenness, prior movements and sounds purporting to echo the sea while, in fact, reflecting the listener's own inner blood stream. It bears the traces of other histories and memories such as the death of Tim's uncle, the fear of drowning, the hope for a safe return from the sea, the colonial "Combermere School for Boys" (11), the dream of Chermadene (38), Tim's and John's childhood love. The conch-shell, then, dramatizes and maintains the conflict between Tim's desire for an identity of unequivocal cultural origins and identity formation processes that can neither generate nor emerge from subjective autonomy.

Both metaphors, the conch-shell and the inner tube, explore the multiple split postcolonial and ethnic subject-positions while altering metaphor's conventional definition as a binary trope of substitution and resemblance into performative operations. The performative citation of the conch-shell's various signifying traces places the normalizing effects of the conch-shell metaphor in culturally and historically specific discourses. Simultaneously, a performative reading of the conch-shell metaphor enables a discursive process of resignification. The conch and the inner tube negotiate the cultural and psychological losses and gains of those "tormenting time[s] of indecision" (22) which mark the historical and contemporary experience of Caribbean exile and emigration. At the same time, a performative reading of these metaphors contests the privileged use of tropes such as irony, mimicry, satire, and allegory in theoretical conceptualizations of ethnic Canadian texts to examine some exclusionary practices of cultural representation .

If it is true that one cannot write outside of metaphor, it seems necessary to probe why a theoretical evaluation of metaphor seems to be frequently absent from the discourses of ethnic Canadian literary criticism. For a tentative answer I would like to turn to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's ground-breaking and widely used concept of a "minor literature." As I have mentioned in my "Introduction," the revolutionizing and deterritorializing practices Guattari and Deleuze assign to ethnic writing often determine to what degree metaphor as well as other forms of symbolism are marginalized in ethnic

literary discourses. I now wish to examine their concept of an "intensive" writing as well as Söderlind's notion of metaphor in more detail. In my reading of these critics I want to underscore that we need to find more diverse ways of theorizing metaphor in order to account for the ways in which metaphor disrupts dominant discourses of cultural identity in such novels as *The Origin of Waves*.

Departing from Kafka's rejection of metaphor as a trope of power and containment, Deleuze and Guattari equally classify metaphor as a nominal trope of substitution and binary representation. With view to their assumed rhizomatic or machine-like writing practices of minor literatures, they by and large oppose metaphor to the polysemous uses of metamorphosis. Rather than referring to a proper and figurative referentiality, metamorphosis denotes "a distribution of states" (22) or what Guattari and Deleuze term an "*intensive* utilization of language" (22). Intensive writing, they propose, depends on "*a collective assemblage of enunciation*" which eliminates the writing subject and establishes the "revolutionary conditions" (18) of ethnic literature. Underscoring the intrinsic tensions of language, intensive forms of writing disjoin the nodal points at which the reference between the vehicle and tenor of a metaphor appears as a proper and natural relation. The deterritorializing effects of intensive writing result from privileging the signifier because an intensive use of language "directly links the word to the image" (23) and denaturalizes the relation between signifier and signified. Although the notion of an ethnic "intensive" writing rightly calls into question the authority of the proper name and referentiality, it can only do so by excluding the 'intensive' uses of metaphor on grounds of an exclusively binary and non-discursive definition of metaphor.

What Deleuze's and Guattari's approach overlooks are the disruptive effects of metaphorical punning that, for instance, characterize John's language. The one thing, John explains to Tim, the "Eye-talians can't face" is that "*Hannibal cross the fucking Alps*" (97). Trying to make amends for his ethnocentric and universalizing comments on the "Eye-talians," John contemplates the particularities of language: "*[T]ransgresserat*," as he

remembers from reciting "Virgil *Aeneid* and Livy XXI and Caesar *Gallic War*"(97), "have

a connection to *transgression*, in a figurative sense, although the strict sense is *crossing*? I

suppose a crossing-over is a crossing-over, even if one is crossing the Alps, or crossing-

over a man's woman!" (149). The passage implies that metaphor, which etymologically

designates a crossing-over, participates in "intensive" forms of writing. The various

connotations and repetitions inscribed in John's notion of "crossing-over" destabilize the

previous reference of *transgresserat* to national conquest. On a more theoretical level, we

might say that John's interpretation of "crossing-over" implies a metaphorical operation that

disrupts received referentiality yet maintains some of metaphor's normalizing effects. After

all, John associates the classical meanings of *transgresserat* with male dominance and

sexual prowess.

To exclude metaphor from intensive writing practices also suggests an erasure of

the particularities of ethnic identity formation and thus leads to a dehistoricized practice of

ethnic writing in which identities are articulated outside the constraints of power. By

overlooking the rhetorical particularities of ethnic texts, especially within their dominant

modes of realist writing, Deleuze's and Guattari's exclusionary notion of ethnic "intensive"

writing participates in hegemonic constructions of ethnicity. In other words, a concept of

writing that sidesteps the metaphorical power of language erases the traces of those

conflicting and divided discourses that make ethnicity, in Kamboureli's words, a

productive discourse "where contestation occurs and where alternate lines of action ought

to be sought" ("Technology" 203). The perpetual recurrence of the conch-shell metaphor in

Tim's narrative and memory suggests that the traces of the various intersecting and

contesting discourses inscribed in the conch-shell, namely Tim's diasporic life and history,

his withdrawal into silence and his desire for cultural authenticity, function as identity-

effects and defy obliteration.

By relinquishing metaphor Deleuze and Guattari also abandon an empowering tool

of writing and ignore that metaphor operates through various turns and detours that open it

toward catachresis. Metaphor literally operates as what Tim's mother calls a "'friction' of [someone's] imagination" (87), a tension or impediment within language that breaks with conventional referentiality and enables the circulations of previously hidden meanings within metaphor. The pun Tim cites illustrates that to disrupt "proper" referentiality does not necessarily need not emphasize the signifier or vehicle of a metaphor. Instead, the miscitation of an idiomatic expression, such as the turn from "a figment" to a "friction" of someone's imagination, opens metaphor towards its multiple circulations in different literary and philosophical discourses. "Friction" underscores the conflict and provisionality of meanings that emerge from the unstable relation between vehicle and tenor rather than just foregrounding the vehicle. Metaphor precisely enables "intensive" forms of writing because it participates in the discursive production of power and thereby in the formation of ethnic subjectivities.

If metaphor functions as a crucial agent in the production of power, it also guarantees that the power it produces can never attain an absolute status. Metaphors, such as the conch-shell and the inner tube, stress the formation of an ethnic subjectivity that, as Kamboureli contends, "is never utterly free and of itself" ("Technology" 204) but part of the power structures by which it is produced. For example, if in Tim's unconscious the conch-shell figures as an internalized pressure to conform to a politics of multiculturalism organized around distinct cultural origins, it also enables Tim to recognize that this demand is what constructs him as ethnic. The conch-shell, therefore, signifies an ethnic subject, in Kamboureli's words, that "when it speaks of and through itself it also speaks back to what defines, and thus delimits, it as ethnic" (1993, 204).

How, then, can one conceptualize metaphor within the context of ethnic writing other than in homogenizing terms? Söderlind's study *Margin/Alias* examines "linguistic effects of alterity" (8) in a number of Canadian literary texts. Söderlind outlines a rhetoric of ethnicity that measures how marginality or territoriality, namely cultural homogeneity, produces or is produced by the texts under consideration. Looking at the extent to which

certain tropes can effect more or less territoriality, Söderlind attributes a low coefficient of homogeneity to metaphor because its tension between "similarity and dissimilarity" always generates ambiguity and engages in "a kind of translation" (25). She further argues that metaphor operates similar to the Freudian "uncanny" by "simultaneously indicat[ing] identity and difference, [. . .] [the] strange and familiar." Söderlind, however, locates the symbolic value of metaphor's simultaneous operations in a pre-linguistic stage of consciousness, "where distinctions between proper and improper are not yet operative because property and identity do not exist" (24). Her view presupposes that metaphorical signification can be divided into proper and improper, literal and figurative meaning. This division also leads her to exclude catachresis from metaphorical operations.

Söderlind, it seems, may underestimate the interventive potential of catachresis in both ethnic and postcolonial texts when she dismisses the trope as being merely a "[tenorless] vehicle" (25). In contrast to Söderlind, Spivak convincingly argues that catachreses rework metaphorical excess, namely that what is absent in metaphor or what remains as a trace or *différance* within metaphor and makes its prior discursive circulations accessible.[82] On the one hand, then, Söderlind's study usefully underscores the self-deconstructive properties of metaphor and, in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari, resituates metaphor in a psychoanalytical discourse of alterity and ethnicity. For a reading of metaphor in Clarke's novel this shift is crucial because it accommodates the dialogical structure of the novel in which John becomes Tim's "therapist" (181). On the other, *The Origin of Waves* contains a number of examples that articulate metaphor through catachresis and suggest that metaphor helps construct an unconscious in retrospect of past experiences.

While John's analytical capacities are part of his charade and frequently lead to a reductive reading of Tim's dreams and loss of Lang, his unwitting misquotations of names connect Tim's psychic life to his social position. John compares Tim's obsession to kill black ants to the introverted sinologist Peter Kien, the protagonist of Elias Canetti's novel

Auto Da Fé, who becomes the victim of both a psychoanalytical misdiagnosis and his dissociation from and disdain for his social environment. Misquoting Kien's name, John tells Tim that he, like "Klein" (96), suffers from "love gone so far that it turn-into hate and hatred" (97). John's misspelling of Kien's name contains several implications that help us read metaphor in performative terms. First, John subverts his own narrative because the allusion to Kien's misdiagnosis also introduces the likely failure of John's analytical insights. Second, the act of misnaming produces agency because it considers names and identities to be unstable. Misquoting names, as I have discussed it in the context of *Omeros*, intervenes into standardized reference systems of meaning and designates a core element of what Judith Butler theorizes as the performative production of power and agency in and through language.

To emphasize, then, a performative understanding of metaphor does not deny metaphor's regulatory and derivative properties. Instead, it interrupts metaphor's circulation in hegemonic power discourses by reiterating its excess of meaning. Concurrently, metaphors that mark sites of untranslatability indicate the ways in which a subject is produced under duress. In Tim's psychology the conch-shell signals the disavowal of what Tim perceives as a lost ideal and original cultural belonging while the reiteration of the metaphor emphasizes the impossibility of cultural authenticity. Similarly, Tim's misquotation of 'common sense' as "comma-sense" (20) recodes normative effects of power as forged within language while referring to a syntax of separations, conjunctions, and permutations which symbolically defines ethnic subjectivities as well as the necessity to live in the "semicolon of the North" (Clarke, "Semicolon" 255). Tim's catachresis foregrounds the discursive construction of "common sense" and prevents us from reading identity in totalizing terms.

Experimenting with the various effects of a prescriptive and internalized notion of ethnic "purity," Clarke's novel investigates what Winfried Siemerling calls the "symbolic boundaries" (15) necessary for the perpetuation of cultural homogeneity within a pluralist

constitution of multiculturalism. The constitution and utilization of these boundaries in a normative discourse of multiculturalism, however, also depend on how subject-positions are psychologically constituted prior to the experience of emigration. As Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests, it is the notion of a trauma or lost ideal that is reworked in the process of both immigration and the discovery of ethnicity, which significantly influences the fashioning of ethnic "multiple selves" (86). In Tim's case, however, the disavowed loss of cultural belonging does not lead to but rather inhibits heterogeneous identity formation processes. The inner tube and, more explicitly, the conch-shell metaphor mediate between the need for multi-accentuated and provisional identity formations and the desire for an unequivocal origin which through the melancholic lens of distance and time is projected into either the memory of the Caribbean or the figure of Lang, Tim's lost love. In fact, Tim's psychic life is regulated by a series of losses that substitute each other and are symbolized in the conch-shell metaphor which at once cancels and preserves the memory of loss. What Tim fails to acknowledge is that the loss of his Barbados childhood and his love to Lang, which substitutes for Tim's originary loss of belonging, constitute him as a subject. This failure of self-recognition also prohibits him from acknowledging his culturally mixed identity. At the same time, a recognition of loss does not and cannot eradicate the experience of loss. For that reason the conch-shell metaphor does not undergo a final process of sublation. Instead, Tim severs his libidinal attachments from it and transfers them to a related but less regulatory object, the inner tube. At the end of the novel Tim watches an inner tube, similar to the one Tim tried to save from the sea in Barbados, floating on Lake Ontario. The sight of the inner tube prevents him from committing suicide and opens the possibility of scripting an identity of "multiple selves." From the prologue to the ending of Clarke's novel, the various narrative repetitions and effects of the conch-shell and the inner tube suggest that metaphor itself denotes a case of "tormenting indecision" (22).

The prologue signals both a narrative of memory and, in Tim's unconscious, the cathectic configurations of the conch-shell and the inner tube as "the flotsam and the jetsam of the sea" (1). Washed ashore, the dead conch-shell does not move with the rhythm of the waves but is twice hidden from the boys' sight: "Once, when, the wave brought sand in its thrust [. . .], and once again, the second dying time, when the wave went back out to sea, [. . .] the conch-shell was hardly moved from its stubborn and insistent posture of voicelessness" (1-2). The silence of the conch-shell, however, seems ambivalent. On the one hand, as a silent witness of Caribbean history, the conch-shell indicates the dispossession of language experienced through the middle passage, colonialism, and immigration. Conveying an image of death, the silence of the conch-shell not only refuses communication but also hints at Tim's predominant association with it as the harbinger of his uncle's death who drowned at sea. On the other hand, the movement of a "second dying time" engages with metaphor in a self-reflexive way proposing narrative operations of repetition and negation without change. The notion of a "second dying time" also stands as a reminder of metaphor's differential movement in form of a detour tending towards self-destruction. The ambivalence of the conch-shell, then, resides in those differential value inscriptions which generate, in Butler's terminology, an abject yet functional outside. In Tim's early memory the conch-shell connotes his fear of death and his belief in possessing a natural, unwavering, and, thus, non-discursive identity. Yet, from the beginning, the doubled movement of the metaphor undermines the normalizing effects of the conch-shell.

Clarke's novel recites destablizing effects of the conch-shell metaphor through its intertextual echoes. For example, in Walcott's *Omeros*, the conch-shell not only links former colonial desires to the contemporary exotic market value of the Caribbean as tourist paradise, but the "conch's moan" (12) also envisions the desire to reinvent language. In the Greek name for Homer, Omeros, "*O* was the conch-shell's invocation" (14), a sigh that projects an imaginary space without claims to originality but appeals to an inevitable

cultural hybridity. The conch-shell's invocation, however, is also troublesome. It reverberates with the wordlessness and silence of the sea, the four Barbadian boys in George Lamming's novel *In the Castle of My Skin* encounter at the beach and which they try to read through their own history and expectations. Eventually, however, the sea does not yield more than the fear "*of being part of what you could not become*" (308). The invocation of the conch-shell, then, is an uncertain one but also cross-cut by a third reference that highlights the metaphor's "constitutive instability." In Michelle Cliff's novel *Abeng* the conch allegorizes a Jamaican girl's struggle for coming to terms with her racially and culturally mixed heritage. Here the conch invokes both the instrument that ordered the slaves to the canefields and a vital means of liberation and communication used within Maroon communities. In respect to Clarke's novel, the conch-shell functions as a continuous catachrestic void in the libidinal organization of Tim's unconscious. More precisely, it generates an excess of culturally heterogeneous meanings which Tim's unconscious censors and curtails in order to preserve the normative inscriptions of cultural authenticity initially attached to the conch-shell. Simultaneously, the conch-shell's connotations of resistance, uncertainty, and invocation mediates the notion of identity as an open field of contesting subject-positions, a field that, in the Caribbean context, is always hybrid. While a performative reiteration of those values and positions entails the possibility of agency, that possibility remains partially frustrated by Tim's incapacity to envision non-essentialist identities outside dominant conceptualizations of multiculturalism and his perpetual disavowal of loss.

His eventual agency does not derive from the performative potential of the conch-shell but from the regulatory modes of the metaphor of the inner tube which designate the inscription and recognition of an originary loss. A floating toy made of an old truck tire, the inner tube interrupts the exotic imagination of a pastoral Caribbean landscape. "[P]atched in many different colours of rubber, black, brown, and red" (5), the inner tube marks Barbadian economic deprivation, cultural and racial heterogeneity. Furthermore, the

flexible and floating properties of the tube link the metaphor to John whom Tim perceives as a "double-jointed"(5) "soldier-crab" (4). Thus, the inner tube not only points at John's multiple migrations but relates him to the equally double-jointed Lang. The image further cites Lamming's character Boy Blue and his fascination with crabs. With their "transparent" (Lamming 128) eye-color and transportable crustacean home (Lamming 146), they suggest the conditions and necessities of migration. Yet, the image of a detachable, self-sufficient home turns on itself because, like Walcott's notion of exile, it also implies social isolation and loneliness. With its connotations of self-enclosure, the metaphor of the crustacean home suggests an understanding of multiculturalism that compartmentalizes ethnic groups and cherishes the exoticism of Otherness while keeping the political demands and effects of cultural difference at bay. Those regulatory properties of the inner tube-metaphor are further enhanced when Tim, being unable to swim, cannot save the tube from floating out into the sea. The resulting feeling of impotence and fear interwoven with the presumption that he, other than his class-mates, does not belong to the "'flotsam of [his Barbadian] society'" (20) estranges him from his own culturally mixed background. It also invests the conch and the inner tube with a traumatic desire for cultural and physical "purity" which, in turn, foregrounds material values and a distance to other Caribbean-Canadians.

Lang and Melancholia

Once Tim has migrated to Canada, this traumatic investment in the conch-shell is psychically reconfigured as a melancholic[83] state which both compels Tim's cultural assimilation and prohibits cross-cultural identification processes. In his essay "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud suggests that the driving forces of melancholia are "fears [. . .] of becoming poor" (248) and the refusal to give up ones love, memory, and expectations attached to a lost object. Melancholy thus organizes psychic life through pressures of social adaptation. In Tim's psyche both domains, the psychic and the social, are connected

through the conch-shell. Contemplating the value of money and love as a measurement of social prosperity and successful integration, Tim links these values to his Caribbean past and to his presumed failure of achievement: "Money and love flow past us, like the waves on that beach with that inner tube that drowned at sea; or was lost. And no man came to put the voiceless conch-shell to his lips" (24). Not only is Tim's diction of lamentation and self-debasement common in melancholic persons, but it also, as John aptly observes, "g[ives]-[him]-way" (127). John's remark is ambiguous because it suggests that language hides something that should not be given away, and yet language gives way to or enables speech. Butler considers this double function of language characteristic for melancholia when she argues that "melancholia is the effect of an unavowable loss" which, in turn, generates "a withdrawal [. . .] from speech that makes speech possible" (*Psychic Life* 170). The conch-shell, then, signifies a loss that cannot be directly articulated but whose untranslatability indicates how Tim's psychic life is governed through dominant social norms.

The recitation of the conch-shell primarily appears in the specific context of Tim and Lang's story and effects a further catachresis in which both Lang and the conch-shell emerge as culturally untranslatable and finally vanish from the narrative. Initially, the reader encounters Lang in Tim's almost pathetic memory for she becomes "the sail that gives [him] movement" (14). Not only is Lang immediately absorbed into Tim's idealizing memory of an imaginary Caribbean, but an equally essentialized idea of Lang as the rather undefined "Chinese woman" (100) of his dream becomes Tim's cause for life, for an "injury" that "never heals" (204), and for living in the "psychotic silence" (167) and isolation of a racist and hostile society. He has "[n]o consolation" (180), is "a lost cause" (185) and finally amounts to "nothing" (213). The loss of Lang gradually takes the place of Tim's ego and framed in melancholic lamentations she only figures as a photo, a representation, with a "crease" that looks like "a wound that will not heal" (59). If Lang represents the substitution of a prior loss, namely the loss of an ideal cultural belonging,

then her representation as a photo signals that the objects of losses cannot be traced to an origin but are derivatives. What melancholia and loss produce, is a profound ambivalence, a "tormenting time of indecision" (22), which constitutes Tim as a subject at the expense of Lang.

The lost object the melancholic substitutes for his or her ego, as Freud reminds us, is "of a more ideal kind" and "has not perhaps actually died" but has been lost as an object of love. Indeed, Tim admits that Lang is actually "not dead" (199) so that Tim, as a melancholic, in Freud's words, "knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in [her]" (245). In fact, Tim's melancholia determines how he can represent Lang, namely only as a "face recorded in the faces of all the Chinese women [he] pass[es]" (206). This descriptive generalization is significant for two reasons because, first, it reduces Lang to a homogeneous and racialized category that defines the loss of Tim's social world. Second, it designates the postponed sublation of loss characteristic for melancholia so that, to paraphrase Butler, the refusal to acknowledge loss emerges as the preservation of the "lost object as psychic effects" (*Psychic Life* 182). While Tim's confession that he "live[s] the past as if it is the present" (81) partly acknowledges his melancholic state, he cannot see that it shapes his social life and, in particular, his view of Lang. He remembers that during a dramatically failed scene of sexual intercourse with Lang he smelled "*incense from Beijing, China*" and heard his name "called out in chilling, plaintive, forcing screams of someone drowning, like how [his] uncle was drowning, of someone going-down, down, down" (86). The plaintive lamentation is Tim's voice of melancholia. In this particular encounter, Tim's melancholia effects a speechlessness or untranslatability of a loss that is linked to Tim's Caribbean past and simultaneously, in Butler's words, "preclude[s] the loss of the addressee" (*Psychic Life* 182), of Lang, the new and foreclosed object of love. Through the process of melancholic substitution which takes Lang for Tim's ego, Tim objectifies Lang and constructs her and his own identity in essentialist terms of cultural belonging. This process also ensures that the authority of a state-approved, liberal

multiculturalism[84] can be naturalized in Tim's psychic life and thus prevent him from articulating alternative notions of cultural identification.

Tim's vision of the dead Lang perpetuates his acts of narcissistic self-consolidation and turns Lang into the concept-metaphor of "ethnic woman."[85] The repetition of Lang in the syntax of melancholia reenacts what Elisabeth Bronfen sees as a "*lost object*" which does not necessarily refer to a "presence" but to an "absence" (105). "[D]ead woman," Bronfen argues, "is denied her own body and is thus only a figure for a meaning other than herself [. . .] a living cipher for her lover's desired lost object"(108). In contrast to Bronfen's argument, however, Clarke's text suggests that a lost object cannot be recovered through repetition. When Lang died, the first thing Tim remembers "was the old conch-shell lying on the beach. I wonder who blows it, now? Lang has the same colour almost - had- and it is strange that I would compare the colour of a conch-shell [. . .] to the complexion of Lang. I think about that, all the time" (226). Lang and the conch-shell act as mutual proxies for Tim's failure to come to terms with the multiplicity of cultural meanings and relations inscribed in the conch-shell, that is, with the inescapability of cultural difference, hybridity, and the acceptance that waves have no other origins but the wind. Although Tim finally articulates the connections between his melancholic mourning for Lang and his Caribbean childhood, he cannot disentangle them because he still does not know what he has lost in Lang.

Instead, the end of the novel suggests a further substitution of metaphors which lead Tim to give up his melancholic attachment to his prior losses. Contemplating to drown himself in Lake Ontario, Tim recognizes an "old, black, patched inner tube" (245) floating on the lake and, for the first time, is able to respond to John in a compassionate way. The displacement and reiteration of the inner tube-metaphor signals a provisional agency because it avows but does not eradicate the experience of loss. The constitutive ambivalence generated through loss equally remains because, to a certain extend, Tim's process of self- recognition requires to abandon his distorted memories of both Lang and

the conch-shell. What Tim gains is the capacity to make choices of cultural identifications and to reevaluate the pains of indecision as a productive contestation of culturally heterogeneous borders.

Tim, then, produces Lang and the conch-shell as a constitutive outside which safeguards the reproduction of his essentialist conceptions of ethnicity. Within his narrative the untranslatability of Lang and the conch-shell does not directly derive from an unspeakable trauma, but from Tim's melancholic insistence on traditions and origins that never existed in the first place. A successful cross-cultural translation, however, presupposes, as Chow reminds us, the transmissibility of texts through the word as arcade, that is, through a transparent palimpsest of cultural inscriptions which always already participate in modes of ethnic commodification. Put differently, the word designates a passageway through which the production of meaning through translation remains provisional. A performative conceptualization of metaphor employs and reiterates the semantic excess of translations. Chow emphasizes that the transmissibility of cultural texts "is what *intensifies* in direct proportion to the sickness, the weakening of tradition" (*Primitive* 199). This decay of traditions largely depends on an increased transparency of metaphors on the one-word level in order to destabilize given binary modes of referentiality.

In Clarke's novel the reiteration and differential value inscriptions of the conch-shell and the figure of Lang, and their subsequent exclusion from the text dissolve the binary cultural identifications Tim seeks to assign to them. While Tim participates in the multicultural commodification of ethnicity by authorizing imagined origins and traditions, the performative operative modes of Lang and the conch-shell metaphor dramatize the weakening of culturally essentialist traditions. They constantly intervene into Tim's homogenizing discourse and expose the ways in which Tim's psychic life is regulated through social norms. The performative effect of both the conch-shell and the inner tube depends on being part of discursive power formations. This position enables repeated

citations and disidentifications of these metaphors which both intervene into the received binary reference modus of tenor and vehicle and help us reread the normative effects of power in a productive way. A performative understanding of metaphor in the context of ethnic writing perhaps emphasises a catachrestic notion of identity based on cultural difference and allows for a conceptualization of metaphor in less homogenizing forms. Metaphor's "tormenting times of indecision, " then, can certainly not be resolved but maybe performed beyond its conventional binary coding and suggest a different kind of intensive writing.

Snow as catachresis

By turning to another organizing metaphor of Clarke's text, I suggest to examine some of the catachrestic configurations of the novel's snow metaphor in the context of Canada's nation formation. Snow presents a widely circulated metaphor of a Canadian identity, connoting, among other things, stereotypical constructions of Canada in terms of wilderness, survival, pioneer history, and virgin land. The metaphor of snow indeed has a history of national exclusion. It recalls both Atwood's statement that one can only be a Canadian if one grew up in snow and the nineteenth century notion that black people cannot endure the rougher climates of the North. The novel, however, does not offer simplified dual concepts of snow. In fact, Tim is "walking in the snow" as if "in frozen water" (13) so that the metaphor of Canadian snow and water become contingent. Although the connection between snow and water invokes Tim's memories of waves, snow does not necessarily refer to the Caribbean sea, but rather to Tim's fear of drowning. In the course of the novel, however, the repeated snow metaphor turns into a catachresis, unnaming cultural traditions and dissolving perceived cultural references. As a catachresis, snow eventually becomes a signifier of cultural contamination.

At the beginning of the novel, snow marks an all-embracing stifling whiteness that erases space, time, and difference. Tim seems to be in a psychological and cultural vacuum when he is

> walking in a kind of white valley, for the thickness of the snow has hidden all these buildings from easy sight [. . .]. And the snow has hidden all colour and life from the street, [. . .] and I am alone, and I can see nobody, and nobody can see me. There are only shapes; [. . .] I raise my head against the flakes that enter my eyes, almost blinding me, and those that fall into my ears, tickling me; and I try to laugh at this tickle, to see the fun in it; but there is no sky, and no sun, and no warm sand, only a channel of white. I am walking through a valley with no landmarks on my left side, or my right, to give me bearing and remind me of the notice of movement. (21-22)

The syntactic repetitions of the snow metaphor generate the image of an undifferentiated, monotonous space. As Clarke puts it in his essay "In the Semicolon of the North," snow imparts an image of "white rectitude and order" (256) that erases all individuality. To Tim, snow symbolizes an absence of differences and demarcation lines in an overpowering construct of national homogeneity. Further, in the quoted passage the rhetoric of negations implies a loss of orientation and reference, suggesting that snow operates as a catachresis. For, while it is ubiquitous in the literature and textbooks of the British colonial education system, snow is not a common meteorological feature of the Caribbean. Conceptualized as either an absence or a metaphor for hidden historical presences, snow can also be appropriated as a textual site through which to write one's own history and to unname the metaphor's inscriptions of cultural alienation.

Tim's associations with snow escape their own totalizing intention as different connotations frequently intrude into his homogenizing narrative. For once, he realizes that the whiteness of snow has a "short lifetime" and is contaminated "a second after the snow hits the pavement" (15). Furthermore, Tim frequently links Caribbean images and memories to his perception of snow. Not only have "[t]ime" and snow made him a "walking sail old and worn and tattered" (14), but snow also "reminds" him of his mother's "thick white curtains" which "behaved like six waves or big sails against the wind and the blue sea" (25). By interweaving geographical origins, Tim's culturally mixed

association reflects the novel's theme of cultural indecision and doubleness and denies a language of Walcottian originality. In this way, Clarke's novel questions the applicability of Caribbean literary conventions and references in a Canadian setting.

Indeed, Clarke's critical assessment of Walcott is written in the past tense. In his essay "Public Enemies: Police Violence and Black Youth" we perceive a moment of distance when he states that Walcott "was our historian [. . .] was our guru" (329). Clarke argues that the concept of cultural schizophrenia may be a useful in the context of Caribbean nation formation, but that it politically paralyzes black people living in Canada. While Walcott refuses to exhume the ruins of history, Clarke finds the obliteration of Canada's black history oppressive as it denies him a place in a presumably multicultural society. Moreover, he observes that "nobody who was anybody looked like me, and still I was called upon, both by my own determination and by the society that neglected me, to allow this neglect drive me mad" (330). To subscribe to such a Caribbean reference system as cultural schizophrenia in Canada leaves one helpless and voiceless in situations of racist conflicts. It is not surprising that the distinctly Caribbean metaphors of the conch-shell and the cobbler signal a self-defeating melancholia that entrench the novel's two characters in a blindingly idealized past. In contrast, as a catachrestical configuration of absence and silence, snow engages in a discourse of time that links the historical Caribbean presence in Canada with a future based on cultural heterogeneity.

In the novel, the metaphor of snow coincides with and interrupts the monotony and emptiness of Tim's perception of time. Upon running into one of the indistinguishable shapes in the street, Tim "wonder[s]"and then "recognize[s]" John's cursing voice and he "call[s] back, in this thickening snow, in this flash of abusive time, all those years" (27). In a flash, the past overtakes the present and is translated into the memory of Tim's childhood. The fifty years of his life in Canada are rendered meaningless in this contraction of time. Canada is still a "new environment" (29), and John is bringing the past back to Tim "with his powerful memory of nostalgia" (38). But the abusive quality of time not only

consists in the erasure and freezing of time itself, but it also reveals how Tim has accommodated racist representations of black people and now projects them into the narrative of his environment. He remarks "[o]ut of the mist come shapes which pause to look, [. . .] to wonder why this loud tropical laughter and equatorial joy must take place in this deadening cold, to break the quiet peace of this cold, clean afternoon" (29).

But the quietness and cleanliness Tim associates with snow are also signs of suffocating exclusion and silence. The pedestrians he encounters on his wintry walks through Toronto seem to be "a grimace," and he consents that he "might be imagining [. . .] this quiet unspokenness bordering upon boredom and psychotic silence, and the cleanliness of the city" (167). As a configuration of absence, silence signifies the lack of an adequate representation or acceptance of the historical black presence in Canada. The "psychotic silence," Tim perceives, points at a populist color-blindness that denies the existence of contemporary racism and the history of slavery in Canada. By analyzing the media coverage of the black "riots" in Toronto on May 4th, 1992 that erupted in response to the killing of a black youth by the police, Clarke discusses the common denial of racism in Canada as well as the resistance of Canadian-born black youth against a benevolent multiculturalism. The tabloids presented the "riot" as the day "Toronto [lost] its innocence" ("Public Enemies" 335), implying that Canada has never been racist or violent. Clarke aptly remarks that this Canadian self-representation has "connotation[s] of [. . .] blissful unawareness" and "of inciting undeserved abuse" (335), and thus clandestinely reverses the roles of victim and aggressor. It is this "innocence," I believe, Tim refers to when he links the images of snow and time to a "psychotic silence" (167).

In *The Origin of Waves*, however, the metaphor of the snow suggests that processes of national identification need neither erase nor essentialize differences into binarisms of cultural exclusion. Tim contemplates the "various whiteness of winter" (51) in the paintings decorating the interior of the pub where he and John exchange their life stories."[I]n a strange way," he feels, "now that [his] eyes are accustomed to looking at

them, these paintings make the room even warmer, and [he] feel[s] at home" (51). Through the paintings Tim recognizes that snow is the cold reality of a Torontonian winter as well as a representation with symbolic value, a cultural or political sign open to discursive resignifications. Further, with its Nova Scotian bartender who has been subject to a colonial education similar to Tim and John's and who associates Grecian Urns not with Keats but with his former Greek employer, the pub itself designates a vision of Canada that is determined by regionalism and colonialism. The setting of the pub, then, intertwines various historical and cultural geographies and contrasts Tim's constructions of cultural authenticity to a representation of multiculturalism as an interplay of personal experiences of migration, cultural differences, relations and contiguities.

By the end of the novel, the snow metaphor has become contiguous with Caribbean imagery. The "sound of slush and some skids caused by sudden acceleration over ice," Tim observes, recalls, "the waves that used to lap over our feet" (220). Eventually, Tim also tells John that "[w]inter makes time look the *same* time, whatever is the time" (230). He paradoxically calls it the "white darkness" (231) and thus remodifies what he initially perceives as being abusive. The description of snow as a paradox indicates that multiculturalism consists of contradictions which cannot be solved but must be perpetually tested and rearticulated in productive ways. If time now appears as a configuration of the "*same*," this articulation of time suggests, in Paul Gilroy's phrase, a "changing same" because it negates neither the past nor the present, but requires a reading of the one through the other. In Clarke's novel, time is not disjunctive. If it were, the fifty years of Tim's Canadian life would remain the blank that lies between his last day on the beach of Barbados and his reencounter with John. In contrast to Walcott's reading of the present through the past, Clarke's novel suggests the reverse: One needs to read the past through the present in order to write a history that does not follow a cancerous quest for racial legacy and purity, but that rewrites Canadian history in terms of its cultural heterogeneity. In this way, the catachrestical transformation of the snow metaphor negotiates a discourse

of nation formation through processes of cultural translation that do not erase differences, but change the meaning of the terms that are to be translated.

Staged through the intersecting metaphors of the waves, the conch-shell, the inner tube, and snow, *The Origin of Waves* provides a critical perspective on such dominant terms of postcolonial theory as cultural hybridity, indecision, and originality. If *Omeros* transforms cultural hybridity into an authenticating narrative of the Caribbean nation, *The Origin of Waves* explores the psychic and political constraints entailed in the melancholic fabrication of an authentic cultural identity. An analysis of the different generic configurations of the two texts provides a historical context in which to situate their use of metaphor. Combining the conventions of the modern verse epic with a specifically Caribbean notion of mimicry and history, *Omeros* frequently reproduces rather than challenges received modes of nation narration. From this perspective, its use of metaphor tends to impose a synthesizing closure on the identity quest of its male characters. Read performatively, however, *Omeros*'s organizing metaphors of the swift and Helen deconstruct the text's appropriation of cultural and gender differences. In contrast, *The Origin of Waves* can be read as a postrealist narrative that employs metaphor performatively by citing and resignifying the dominant metaphors of one of Clarke's earlier texts (*An American Dutchman*). In this way *The Origin of Waves* rearticulates previously homogenizing principles of identity formation as necessarily incomplete acts of cultural translation. Further, both texts dramatize questions of national belonging through a female character. A performative reading of Helen illustrates the ways in which *Omeros* employs Helen to resolve cultural and gender differences and posits her as an ahistorical icon of the future Caribbean nation. In contrast, the spectral absence of Lang from Clarke's novel forecloses the possibility of both speaking for Lang as a cultural Other and appropriating her as a metaphor for Tim's failure to accept the culturally heterogeneous conditions of his life. Instead, read performatively through the metaphor of the waves, the figure of Lang

opens a narrative space of cultural and psychic contradictions that cannot be solved, but tests the ways in which multiculturalism functions as a power discourse that produces and normalizes identities.

Part IV

Of Signs and Books: Performative Metaphors, Cultural Transfiguration and Historiography

> Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
> Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
> in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
> has locked them up. The sea is History.
> Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History." (364)

In a reading at the "Haus der Kulturen der Welt" in Berlin on November 14, 1998, David Dabydeen explained that in his life as well as in his writing "England was the fullstop of [his] colonial sentence." As a fullstop England marks a beginning, an end, and a rupture, a moment of discontinuity. Referring to both a verdict and the process of writing, Dabydeen's pun of the "colonial sentence" suggests that history comprises multiple narratives constructed through imperial power relations. The production of postcolonial identities entails forms of representation that leave neither colonizer nor colonized untainted by the history of colonialism. Walcott's poem "The Sea is History" articulates a crucial concern of postcolonial writing by asking how to claim or to produce historical memories. To Walcott, the "grey vault" of the sea presents an archetypal and frequently ahistorical Caribbean metaphor that allows him to dramatize Caribbean identity in terms of cultural hybridity and historical transfiguration. Understood as a practice of mimicry and a form of creative amnesia, history, according to Walcott, facilitates a poetic self-fashioning of Caribbean identity.

Walcott's view of history is reminiscent of the ways in which postcolonial studies often function as a method and practice of rereading and rewriting colonial history through the perspective of the colonized and colonizer. In his study *Maps of Englishness*, the English-Caribbean critic Simon Gikandi argues that "empire (and its collapse) provide the infrastructure within which both the colonizer and the colonized have had to reinvent

themselves" (33). To Gikandi and Walcott, imperial crisis signals the advent of various national narratives written from within the cultural and ideological instabilities of modernity. At the same time, they both advocate a form of transcendence or transfiguration of history, presupposing that a reinvention of identity is still possible after the collapse of the British empire. Maintaining that identities cannot be constructed outside of historical power relations, Gikandi emphasises that the "reinvent[ion]" of identity involves the appropriation of colonial forms of representation. While Gikandi's notion of reinvention perhaps flirts with the idea of cultural authenticity, it also allows us to situate the production of postcolonial histories and identities in the gaps between "nation and empire" (Gikandi 49).

Along with Gikandi, we can say that the continuities and discontinuities between the history of empire and the founding of national identities shape postcolonial narratives. In my reading of *Turner* and *The Book of Secrets* I want to foreground those ideological and representational continuities between the practices of empire and nation building that obstruct the reinvention of new cultural identities. More specifically, from different perspectives Dabydeen's long poem *Turner* and Vassanji's novel *The Book of Secrets* illustrate that colonial representations of race and sexuality link the practices of empire and nation building. Both texts dramatize the gap between nation and empire as historiographical narratives of remembering and forgetting colonial violence, suggesting that memories are always derivative and produced in relation to earlier colonial representations of Otherness. In these texts attempts at cultural reinvention or rewriting history on an imperial matrix fail. Instead, to different degrees *Turner* and *The Book of Secrets* indicate that the desire for cultural transfiguration is often part of a colonial legacy and renders immediate forms self-reinvention impossible. By negating, reiterating, and disidentifying colonial forms of representation, each of these texts engages in decolonizing the desire for cultural transfiguration in postcolonial identity formation processes. The metaphors of an imperial painting (*Turner*) and a colonial book (*The Book of Secrets*)

serve as a point of departure for cross-cultural conceptualizations of identity. We need to examine the ways in which both texts employ metaphors in order to destabilize the historical discourses of race and sexuality out of which they emerge and to which they give rise. With their emphasis on historiography, both texts do not allow for a methodological distinction between imperialism and colonialism as two different historical stages of late capitalism. Instead, in *Turner* I discuss imperial forms of representation as a contradictory practice and psychology of national and cultural self-consolidation. Although *The Book of Secrets* is set during the decline of the British empire and Germany's short-lived attempt at colonialism, the novel's narrative strategies are not primarily concerned with imperial representations of British national self-invention. Rather, the novel examines colonial practices of surveillance and classification as dominant forms of cultural control.

Vassanji's novel tells the variously reconstructed events and secrets that shape the life of the East Indian community of Kikono, a small town at the border between Tanzania and Kenya during and after World War I. Like Sky Lee's novel, Vassanji's novel unfolds an archeological narrative of history. It charts the various unwritten stories and experiences of a culturally marginalized community that inadvertently becomes the battlefield of two contending colonial powers. Further, the novel's narrative is organized around the discovery and interpretation of a journal written by the British colonial administrator Alfred Corbin. If we consider the diary as an organizing metaphor of Vassanji's novel, it operates in at least two ways. First, it cites the imperial rhetoric of surveillance, classification, and control pertinent to the operations of colonialism. Second, as a "book of secrets" (148), the diary generates different historical narratives of colonialism. Embedded in a self-reflexive narrative, the diary as well as the ghostly returns of the murdered woman Mariamu, a member of the East Indian community, operate as performative metaphors: They engender refracted and contradictory narratives of colonial and diasporic history that can neither be fully claimed nor read.

As the female victim of colonial history, Mariamu haunts the novel's narrative and questions the ways in which to give voice to unacknowledged memories of the past. In Vassanji's novel, memories supersede geographical boundaries and conventional temporal divisions into past, present, and future. In contrast to *Turner*, *The Book of Secrets* generates collective and individual memories of the past that mark the lives of migrants. We must ask, what happens to World War I memories of the East Indian community of Kikono once its members migrate to different countries? For example, does Canada's Remembrance Day commemorate such victims of World War I as Mariamu, whose descendants, as Vassanji's novel suggests, have migrated to Canada, the US, or to England? Although the novel's African setting does not suggest a direct link to Canadian history, its dramatization of World War I and migration allows us to read Canada's nation formation in a global context. Vassanji's novel, I propose, narrates World War I from the margins of the British Empire and thereby produces counter-memories that produce a critical history of Canada's multiculturalism. Vassanji's novel, I suggest, resignifies and translates colonial metaphors into a cross-cultural narrative of migration. More specifically, I want to explore the ways in which the metaphorical functions of the colonial diary suggest a critical assessment of the historical continuities between the practices of empire and Canada's nation building.

Like Vassanji's novel, Dabydeen's *Turner* investigates imperial and colonial forms of cultural representation. It presents a critical rewriting of J.M.W. Turner's sublime painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On* and of the critical discourses that made this painting an icon of English nationalism. The Royal Academy exhibited the painting in 1840, seven years after the abolition of the slave trade and two years after the beginning of East Indian indenture in the Caribbean. The painting occasioned John Ruskin's patriotic idolization of Turner's sea and battle paintings as symbols of national and imperial power and identity. Against Ruskin's and other nationalists' evaluation of Turner's painting, Dabydeen traces the contradictory history of Turner's painting through the eyes of an art historian and poet. His poem gives voice to a drowning African slave represented in the lower left corner of Turner's painting. Submerged under water, the slave contemplates his past, invents childhood memories, and recalls the sexual

abuse aboard the slave ship. When he finally encounters a stillborn slave child thrown overboard another ship, he desires to mother it and to reinvent himself and the aborted life of the child. Realizing that he cannot invent himself outside the history of British imperialism and its representational practices, his desire for cultural transfiguration remains frustrated. *Turner*, I suggest, dramatizes how the contradictory politics of Turner's sublime art at once destabilize and confirm imperial power relations. Similar to other postcolonial rewritings of imperial narratives, *Turner* illustrates that the intertwined ideologies of humanist compassion and the civilizing mission of empire are allegorized through the figure of the slave to represent Britain's domestic social conflicts and changes. The poem examines, in Paul Gilroy's words, the ways in which "images of black suffering" operate as "an integral means with which England was able to make sense of itself and its destiny" ("Art" 51) as a nation shaped by a 400-year-long history of colonialism.

Turner articulates postcolonial identity formation processes neither through a reconciliation with nor a reinvention of the past. Instead, the metaphorical orchestration of the poem suggests that identity consists of violent and insoluble contradictions. Other than in Walcott's formulation of the sea, *Turner*'s sea is not the locked vault of history awaiting its symbolic transformation into a foil of Caribbean self-realization through mimicry. Rather, "[t]he sea decorates, violates" (Dabydeen, *Turner* 9) and as such acts within and against the two classic discourses of metaphor, namely rhetoric ("violat[ion]") and poetics ("decorat[ion]"). *Turner*'s sea metaphor embodies the violence of language and representation. It operates as a meta-metaphor, underscoring the impossibility of thematizing metaphor and representing history outside of metaphor. Instead, the sea as well as metaphor signify ornamentation and obliteration, deception and erasure. While Dabydeen's use of metaphor recalls key concepts of Ricoeur's and Derrida's conceptualization of the trope, it does so in a critical manner. If Ricoeur argues that metaphor operates as a categorical transgression of Aristotle's system of classification while maintaining a theoretical distinction between poetic and literal language, Dabydeen's poem, I suggest, refutes both the idea of metaphorical transgression and the notion that

metaphor is a trope of singular and ingenious invention. Instead, the African's desire to generate new metaphors causes him to recognize that his desire and imagination are encumbered in imperial forms of representation. While *Turner* suggests that metaphor must perforce be read as a trope of historical detours, it also examines the ways in which specific historical contexts inflect metaphor with particular meanings. For example, the violence of metaphor does not exclusively appear as a linguistic determinant that shapes and is shaped by Western philosophy alone. Rather, both *Turner* and *The Book of Secrets* intertwine the violent operations of metaphor with the representational and physical violation of the black body. As the infrastructure of empire, the sea once again functions as a metaphor. Yet, in contrast to Walcott's archetypal sea metaphor, Dabydeen's underscores the violent and self-reproductive operations of the trope. Put differently, if all attempts at cultural transfiguration and reinvention are ultimately frustrated in *Turner*, then this failure stems from the impossibility to conceptualize metaphor and identity outside of metaphor and its previous uses in imperial discourses of cultural Otherness.

This initial look at the operations of metaphor in *Turner* suggests that the poem situates itself between received literary and theoretical discourses. It neither allows for an easy celebration of cultural hybridity nor for postcolonial counter-narratives of identity retrieval and reinvention. Instead, the poem explores the signifying gaps in the history of English nationalism that define Dabydeen's "colonial sentence." My discussion of *Turner* examines the ways in which the politics of the sublime and the poem's rhetoric of negativity operate and interact with each other. In order to show the discursive construction of Turner's paintings as icons of British nationalism and metaphors of cultural mastery and superiority, I want to situate my reading of *Turner* historically in Ruskin's appraisal of Turner's *Slave Ship*. This will help us to explore how Dabydeen's poem contests Ruskin's nationalist claims of cultural control and authenticity through a performative dramatization of its organizing metaphors of the moon and the name Turner. Rather than endorsing a

Walcottian Adamic vision of renaming the past, the poem's reiteration of the name Turner establishes several points of identification between the drowned African, the stillborn child, J.M.W. Turner, and Turner, the poem's captain of the slave ship. To different degrees the reiteration and disidentification of the name Turner and the moon metaphor locate both figures, the drowned slave and J.M.W. Turner, in the margins of imperial power and dependency, disrupting racially and culturally homogenizing narratives of Self and Other. Since my study is primarily concerned with generating productive reading strategies of metaphor in a postcolonial context, it is important to examine the ways in which Dabydeen's poem plays with and presupposes the reader's complicity with acts of cultural transfiguration. A brief examination of the poem's politics of transfiguration helps us avoid reading its organizing metaphors through a synthesizing perspective.

Chapter 9

Dabydeen's *Turner*: The Politics of Cultural Transfiguration

Locating the Reader in Dabydeen's Preface to Turner

In the preface to *Turner*, Dabydeen provides a reading of his own text. Like the poem, the preface is divided into separate sections and entitled with the same numeral fonts the poem uses, indicating a formal and thematic continuity between preface and poem. As the preface explains, the poem gives voice to the "submerged head of the African in the foreground of Turner's painting" (ix). The African's attempts at self-reinvention in "Turner's (and other artists') sea" fail and his "real desire" is for an absolute cultural originality. History, however, cannot be overcome and the head "still recognizes himself as 'nigger'. The desire for transfiguration or newness or creative amnesia is frustrated" (x). His wish to mother another stillborn slave child tossed overboard "from a future ship" is equally frustrated because "[n]either can escape Turner's representation of them as exotic and sublime victims. Neither can describe themselves anew but are indelibly stained by Turner's language and imagery" (x). The repetition of "neither" as a negative subject foreshadows the rhetorical strategies of Dabydeen's poem. How can one write in the catachrestic space of modernity, a space which, in the context of the poem, refers to the "'colonial' disjunction of modern times and colonial and slave histories, where the reinvention of the self and the remaking of the social are strictly out of joint" (Bhabha, *Location* 244). The repeated use of the negative in Dabydeen's preface points at a performative dramatization of language and history in a theatrical and Butlerian sense. While the latter pertains to the reiteration of names, verse fragments, and painting segments, the theatrical effect of *Turner* derives from the position Dabydeen assigns the reader in his preface.

By prefacing *Turner* with an apparently authoritative reading of his own text, Dabydeen invites the reader to acknowledge his presumably authentic and representative

status as a postcolonial writer. The invitation seems alluring insofar as it questions and assigns the reader of postcolonial texts a number of hidden expectations. More precisely, the preface alludes to such reading practices that perceive an unquestioned truth-value in the voice of the oppressed and make the postcolonial writer the representative mouthpiece of an allegedly racially and culturally homogenized collective. Reading practices of this sort risk obscuring the role and position of the reader as well as the numerous conflicts and tensions entailed in the production of cultural difference. These readings tend to evaluate postcolonial texts not on their own terms but on the reader's preconceived notion of the postcolonial writer's task. To read postcolonial texts merely through their assumed cultural marginalization reinforces the binarisms of victim and aggressor, colonized and colonizer, blame and guilt, and subsequently reproduces imperial power relations. If the reader takes the preface's authorial tone at face value, she or he also fosters her or his own desire for cultural transfiguration. The ruse of the preface, I want to argue, consists in throwing the reader back onto his or her own unacknowledged reading desires and makes her or him complicit with some of the regulatory discourses of empire.

To read oppression through a humanist and compassionate perspective does not suffice to undo the codes of power and race that narrate the English nation. Instead, humanist reading strategies often synthesize cultural conflicts and contain political discontentment. For example, J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship* represents a critique of the atrocities of the slave trade. Yet, the painting's sublime style aestheticizes the violence of the slave trade without fully engaging in a critique of British imperialism. What is at stake in Turner's painting is the moral and ethical enlightenment and transformation of the English but not the life or history of the drowned, blood-and-flesh slave in the corner of the painting. In Dabydeen's poem, Turner's sublime slave ship, is "anchored in compassion" and sails "for profit's sake" (1). His preface, as well as the poem, reminds the reader of his or her own " interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject" (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" 66).[86] Most importantly, a critical reading of

postcolonial texts must acknowledge that the refracting and domesticating strategies of imperialism have made an absolute division into Self and Other impossible: the reader or/and critic is always already implicated in the hegemonic discourses she seeks to dismantle.[87] Positing his readers precisely at the ideological cross-roads of colonial desire and complicity, Dabydeen plays the devil's advocate and asks us whether or not it is easier to seek historical transcendence and, thus, to substitute liberal compassion and self-beratement for the uneasy prospects of irreconcilable historical differences?

By making the reader a complicit actor in the theater of imperialism, the preface positions the reader as a spectator of *Turner*, aligning the reader of Dabydeen's poem with the viewer of Turner's sublime painting. Similar to the techniques of Greek tragedy, the aesthetic effects of the sublime, namely to generate emotions of terror, pity, and catharsis, depend on evoking the spectator's empathy. In his essay "Turning the Colonial Gaze: Re-Visions of Terror in Dabydeen's *Turner*," Tobias Döring explains that "the function of spectatorship is integral to the operations of terror" which chiefly work through the technologies of "the gaze." Taking his cue from James Joyce's articulation of terror,[88] Döring suggests that dramatizations of terror effect "a covert identification by the spectators with the causes of terror they behold," so that "[s]pectators are [. . .] being placed within a double bind, making common cause with a terrorist power that also threatens to destroy their privileged position" (4). By casting its readers in the position of spectators—literally before the poem/painting--, Dabydeen's preface draws the reader into the operations of terror and indicates the reader's complicit identification with the humanist causes and contradictions of both empire and modernity.[89]

If the act of reading enables a form of agency, we need to examine our own colonizing and colonized reading desires in terms of a critical politics of transfiguration. I would like to distinguish three forms of transfiguration pertinent to a reading of metaphor in *Turner*: imperial self-transfiguration, pluralist, and self-affirmative forms transfiguration. Along with such critics as Spivak, Said, and Gikandi, I understand

imperial self-transfiguration as a process of Othering. This process establishes a continuity between imperial ideologies of cultural control and English nation formation through the construction of race as a universal (i.e., "everybody has a race") and particular (i.e., "everybody belongs to a specific race and must be evaluated accordingly") phenomenon. In the discourse of nation formation, this division between the universal and the particular, as Benedict Anderson observes, enables the building and defense of national boundaries. In imperial discourses of identity formation, this division produces a dominant imperial Self against a disavowed black Other. The colonial Other, as Gikandi convincingly argues, has a supplemental and symbolic function by "endow[ing] England with a romantic notion of its own powers" and "provid[ing] the figures of alterity that would reinforce the civilizational authority of Englishness" (74) during moments of national crisis. Indeed, by criticizing the moral decay brought about by nineteenth century British predatory capitalism through the representational vehicle of the slave trade, Turner's *Slave Ship* employs blackness as a metaphorical mirror of the degenerated imperial Self. To a certain extent, the painting's own mission is to remind the viewer of England's former majestic power and imperial ideals to civilize the world and thus to overcome the moment of national crisis. The painting, then, employs a critique of empire in order to facilitate a practice of imperial self-transfiguration.

The pluralist notion of transfiguration refers to a specific but not uncommon critical response to Dabydeen's poem or to what Aleid Fokkema generally terms "Caribbean epic writing" (340). In his article "Caribbean Sublime: On Transport," Fokkema classifies Walcott's *Omeros* and Dabydeen's *Turner* as "Caribbean epics." While Fokkema admits that the sublime has generally nothing to offer to the postcolonial "struggle over representation," Fokkema also contends that these Caribbean epics "are shot through with both the sublimity of the Enlightenment and that of Romanticism" and "display a postmodern fascination with the unpresentable" (340). If the sublime strives for a "spiritual transport" (340) or movement of the reader, Fokkema's argument goes, the Caribbean

sublime turns this spiritual experience into the literal transport of slaves and envisions a Caribbean wanderer without roots but not without identity. Drawing from Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of the rhizome, Fokkema suggests that the Caribbean sublime generally but particularly in *Turner* articulates "one truly rhizomatic [Caribbean] identity" (342) and "combines commitment to politics with a commitment to literature as a cross-cultural artifact, stopping nowhere, belonging to no one domain" (346). In other words, Fokkema suggests a relational and plural concept of a cross-cultural Caribbean identity.

What, we may ask, are the ideological effects of combining the notion of the rhizome with the aesthetic of the sublime in a postcolonial context? Like other Caribbean critics, Fokkema reads the rhizome as an assemblage of infinitely combined fragments that do not dispense with the notion of identity. Yet, a rhizomatic identity also posits all of its fragments in equal relation to one another and emphasizes movements and states rather than bodies as the condition of identity formation processes. As such feminist critics as Elizabeth Grosz have argued, the notion of the rhizome erases the particular memories and histories inscribed in and constitutive of gendered and racialized bodies in favor of a more universal notion of becoming. In contrast to Fokkema, I want to argue that the sublime equally invests in the erasure of bodies to produce gothic landscapes and in an appropriation of racialized bodies as representational vehicles to inspire awe and terror in the beholder or reader of sublime art. The absence of a living body in *Turner* indicates that the presumably unrepresentable of the sublime cannot be read outside the violation of the black body: It is precisely the violation of the body that has become unrepresentable and naturalized in the aesthetic configurations of the sublime. Neither the drowned African nor the stillborn child can assemble an identity out of fragments that are steeped in specific historical discourses of representation. If we understand a rhizomatic identity as a combined series of largely dehistoricized differences, then the desire for such an identity also embodies a relativist vision of identity that transcends historical contradictions. To formulate cross-culturalism in terms that do not dispense with cultural conflicts, however,

needs to investigate moments of imperial crises and the ways in which their effects produce and abuse colonial spaces of alterity as a foil for contemporary images of racial Otherness. Other than Fokkema, I argue that Dabydeen's *Turner* does not draw on the conventions of the sublime to construct a rhizomatic cultural identity. Instead, the poem dramatizes the ways in which the sublime eroticizes violence and sublimates repressed sexual anxieties and desires that fuel the pornographic fantasies of empire.

Unlike Fokkema's notion of transfiguration, Gilroy's stance for a critical politics of transfiguration suggests a self-affirmative approach toward the articulation of black British art and identity. Gilroy points out that the "politics of transfiguration" does not refer to "a counter discourse but a counter culture that defiantly constructs its own critical, intellectual and moral genealogy anew in a partially hidden public sphere of its own. The politics of transfiguration therefore reveals the internal problems in the concept of modernity" ("It Ain't" 11-12). Gilroy critically acknowledges that the "The Other Story,"[90] the story of the former slave and racially Other, cannot be neatly separated from the imperial formations of the English nation. Elsewhere Gilroy maintains that there is the "desire to make art out of being both black and English" so as to recode "the cultural core of national life" ("Art" 46). Yet, his understanding of the "politics of transfiguration" rarely considers the ways in which imperialism produces its Others within England. For example, in his discussion of Turner's *Slave Ship*, Gilroy traces the ambiguous reception of the painting, ranging from Ruskin's national idolatry to his later disavowal of the painting to its defamation as an "absurd rather than sublime" (Gilroy, "It Ain't" 50) work of art. Gilroy concludes that it is the painting's "strange history" that "pose[s] a challenge to the black English today. It demands that we strive to integrate the different dimensions of our hybrid cultural heritage more effectively" (51). What Gilroy does not discuss is J.M.W. Turner's alienated and marginalized position within Victorian society, a position, as Dabydeen's *Turner* suggests, that is at once linked to and separate from postcolonial concerns of identity formation. More specifically, it is the conflict between the desire and the impossibility to integrate disparate

histories that links Turner's painting to postcolonial concerns. Moreover, Dabydeen's dramatization of *The Slave Ship* illustrates the ways in which the techiques of imperial normalization of England's domestic life intersect with Britain's colonial enterprise. In contrast to Turner's painting, however, Dabydeen's poem implies that the desire to integrate or harmonize historical contradictions is fallacious. This does not imply that we should abandon Turner's art. On the contrary, as an ambiguous artist of empire, Turner needs to be "blackened" or claimed as an element of England's racially hybrid narrative of the nation.

A critical politics of transfiguration, then, can neither do away with the violent reality of racism nor make this reality the sole ground to which postcolonial cultural representations return to. While I neither want nor can supply a fourth definition of cultural transfiguration that would solve the problems outlined in the previous three definitions, I wish to argue that *Turner* contests all three forms of transfiguration and, instead, illustrates the overdetermination, the endless erasures and reinscriptions of metaphorical meaning. Upon encountering another "part-born" child "tossed overboard" (1) another slave ship, the dead African, the narrative voice of Dabydeen's poem, "name[s] it [the stillborn child] Turner" (1). He hopes "to begin anew in the sea" (39) and wants to craft and shape "[t]his creature's bone and cell and word beyond / Memory of obscene human form" (28). But the stillborn child defies to be the receptacle of the African's hope for new beginnings: "'Nigger!' it cried, seeing / Through the sea's disguise as only children can, / Recognising [him] below [his] skin long since / washed clean of the colour of sin" (16). "'Nigger,' it cries, naming [him] from some hoard / Of superior knowledge [. . .] 'Nigger,' / It cries, sensing its own deformity" (28). In this passage the endless repetition of history forstalls transfigurative processes and makes it impossible for the stillborn child to locate itself outside of history. Names are no longer unique and metaphors are no brilliant inventions but clusters of obscured and defiled histories, stalling cultural reinvention. The child refuses to make this history of loss and victimization the agent of change, for this strategy

of resistance often works within the Manichean operations of dominant historiography.[91] Rather than discovering the hoped for possibility of new origins, the African contemplates resistance in terms of either nativist self-invention or assimilation strategies through which he "should have sunk / To these depths, where terror is transformed into / Comedy" (21).[92] The African soon realizes that all of these strategies merely mimic the master's voice and repeat "the ancient formulae of Empire" (28), its self-consolidating practices of naming, classifying, and controlling the cultural Other.

By addressing the African as "Nigger," the child situates him in Fanon's discourse of black invisibility and obliterates the African's hope for a new beginning at the moment when he is interpellated into a historical consciousness. If we accept Butler's premise that the act of interpellation is not an act of divine hailing, but a discursively constituted act, the African's attempt at transfiguration appears ambiguous. Signifying historical origins and the African's unconscious, the child can only address the African as "Nigger" because it has itself already been interpellated as such. To be interpellated as "Nigger" by the child requires the African to become self-conscious and recognize his origins as authoritative and simultaneously internalizes this authority as his identity. The ambiguity of interpellation emerges through the child's attempt to transfer a specific identity to the African, to force him to recognize and internalize the cry "Nigger" as an authoritative voice. Yet, while the African recognizes this call of history, he also rejects its authority by realizing that his own inventions of origins and his unconscious, metaphorically embodied in the child's scream, are already historically constructed. The disjunction inherent in the transference of identity through interpellation results in the African's acknowledgment that both his unconscious and historical origins are subject to discursive formations of power.

In the interpellative process, the African's unconscious becomes readable as a site of regulatory and productive discourses of power and history. In the context of diasporic identity formation, a critical politics of transfiguration requires a performative reading of interpellation and agency so as to write identities through the effects of history. Further, we

need to consider that the child asserts its authority as an agent of interpellation by uttering its fragmented memory of violence through the powerful language of metaphor, through an injurious name. The partly disembodied condition of the child, however, points at a process of physical erosion, a process that is also characteristic for metaphorical operations. According to Derrida's understanding of metaphor, it is the effacement of a physical image inscribed in metaphor that enables metaphorical operations of substitution and sublation. If an idealist concept of metaphor erases the trope's physical ground by synthesizing metaphor's tenor and vehicle, Dabydeen's poem, to use another metaphor, experiments with a sort of rhetorical dis-figurement. More specifically, the metaphor of the stillborn child is possibly a metaphor without ground, a metaphor that denies its constitutive bodily inscriptions and thereby impedes metaphor's synthesizing operations. To a certain extent, this argument must remain circular because the stillborn child still functions as a meta-metaphor. However, from a postcolonial perspective, it enables us to see that metaphor can never advance from a natural, unhampered physical ground, for it is the violated black body that conditions metaphor as a representational vehicle of the various aesthetic and political narratives of empire. The metaphor of the stillborn child, then, historicizes what seems to be natural in metaphorical operations and thus guards against a transfiguration of representational violence.

The Slave Ship, Ruskin's Narrative of the English Nation, and Turner's Moon/Eye metaphor

Like Turner's *Slave Ship* and Ruskin's critical assessment of the painting, Dabydeen's long poem explores the sea as an organizing metaphor of imperial narratives of the nation. In *Turner*, the sea is not an invincible natural force, but an infrastructure of colonial commerce and exploitation, a psychic space of amnesia that is more suffocating than creative, an abyss of lost languages and histories. *Turner's* Fragment XII provides the central metaphors of the sea and the moon pertinent to my discussion of Ruskin's and

Turner's narratives of empire. Since my readings of *Turner* will frequently return to the

following passage, I quote at length:

> The sea has brought me tribute from many lands
> Chests of silver
> [. . . . .]
> Which, marvelled at, but with the years grown rusty
> And mouldy, abandoned - cheap and counterfeit
>   goods:
> The sea has mocked and beggared me for centuries,
> Except for scrolls in different letterings
> Which, before they dissolve, I decipher
> As best I can. These, and the babbling
> Of dying sailors, are my means to languages
> And the wisdom of other tribes. Now the sea
> Has delivered a child sought from the moon in years
> Of courtship, when only the light from that silent
> Full eye saw me whilst many ships passed by
> Indifferently. She hides behind a veil
> Like the brides of our village but watches me
> In loneliness and grief for that vast space
> That still carries my whisper to her ears,
> Vaster than the circumference of the sea
> That so swiftly drowned my early cries
> In its unending roar. There is no land
> In sight, no voice carries from that land,
> My mother does not answer, I cannot hear her
> [. . . . .]
>   my dazed mind
> Thought, across a distance big beyond even
> Turner's grasp (he sketches endless numbers
> In his book
> [. . . . .]
> He snaps the book shut, his creased mouth
> Unfolding in a smile, as when, entering
> His cabin, mind heavy with care, breeding
> And multiplying percentages, he beholds
> A boy dishevelled on his bed).
> [. . . . .]
>   Now I am loosed
> Into the sea, I no longer call,
> I have even forgotten the words.
> Only the moon remains, watchful and loving
> Across a vast space. (17-18)

In this passage the metaphor of the sea recalls both Caribbean and imperial narratives of the

nation. Neither a locus for transfiguration nor an imperial colony, the sea appears as a "vast

space" in which memory is lost and history arrested. The meter and rhetoric of the poem

does not offer what many Caribbean writers and critics consider an authentic feature of

Caribbean poetry. For example, Brathwaite argues that the creolized world of the Caribbean ought to be expressed in Caribbean nation language because "[t]he hurricane does not howl in pentameters" (*History* 10).

Turner, however, does not employ the Caribbean *creole continuum*. Instead, the poem effects an elegiac tone that emulates the rhythm of the sea. At times it seems as if the poem's narrative voice vanishes behind its own lofty rhetoric, achieving an uncanny emptiness that applies the representational techniques of the sublime to its own ends. The passage quoted above does not describe an awe-inspiring and raging sea, but a vast and silent abyss punctuated by the negations of the African's memory. In both postcolonial and Western discourses of language, silence and muteness serve as markers of terror and indicate moments of physical violation and symbolic erasure. *Turner*'s solemn tone, then, generates silence while recalling the rolling movement of the sea, the most sublime of Turner's objects of representation and the emblem of English maritime power. Superimposed on Turner's imperial canvas and echoing the style of the sublime, *Turner* situates itself in the double-bind of England's racially divided narrative of the nation.

Despite Turner's intention to make the *The Slave Ship* a critique of imperial politics, John Ruskin's critical appropriation of the painting turned it into a national monument of English identity. To Ruskin, as Dabydeen points out, Turner's *Slave Ship* "'represented the noblest sea that Turner ever painted . . . the noblest certainly ever painted by man . . . If I were to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this'" (ix).[93] The dying Africans, Dabydeen observes, were "relegated to a brief footnote [that] reads like an afterthought" (ix). Ruskin's reading of *The Slave Ship* transforms both Turner's representation of a particular event in the history of the slave trade and his comment on the corrupting greed of Victorian capitalism[94] into an affirmative and nationalist statement of England's leading role as an imperial power. To Ruskin the painting presents a universal truth fortified by a particular national aesthetic sensibility.

Ruskin's reading silences the painting's attempt to represent slavery and racist violence. Turner, however, was well aware of the atrocities of slavery and made it the focal theme of his painting, an aspect Ruskin did not mention in his praise of the painting.[95]

In his *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808'1839), Thomas Clarkson documents that in 1783 Captain Collingwood, commander of the slaver *Zong*, discarded sick Africans into the sea so as not to lose the insurance on his human cargo. Insurance was only guaranteed for those slaves who died during a storm but not for those who died of sickness. As Jack Lindsay points out, Turner, with his own abolitionist and pro-Chartist affiliations is very likely to have known about the incident. Why, then, does Ruskin, the faithful architect of Victorian and national monuments, not mention these, even in his time, well-established historical events? At the time of his comment, England had already abolished the slave trade and put the humanist endeavors of the Abolition movement on its official agenda of ethical and political reform. The abolition of the slave trade served England to point a reprimanding finger at its other dominions and slave-trading European rivals. To endorse the Abolition movement not only helped contain political unrest, but it also reaffirmed England's vision of itself as the carrier of a morally enlightened and benevolent form of imperialism. For Ruskin to include the topic of slavery into his comment would not have interfered with the politics of empire. In fact, imperial politics embraced the abolition of slavery in order to propagate England's allegedly humanist and civilizing ideals and to return higher profits from indentured labor that replaced the slave trade.

The significance of Ruskin's comment on Turner's painting must subsequently lie elsewhere, namely in its attempt at naturalizing the contradictions within the power discourse of imperialism and its aesthetic expression. Ruskin writes that the painting "is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm" (404), deleting the ambiguity of the painting's subtitle, a "Typhoon coming on." The timing of the storm, however, is not a banality, given the insurance policies for slaves. To make the storm a fact rather than a

probability gives some legal license or at least sympathy to Captain Collingwood's drowning of the slaves. Ruskin's reversal of a "Typhoon coming on" into "a sunset [. . .] after prolonged storm" also corresponds to his conservative support for Governor Eyre who, in 1865, crushed the Jamaican Morant Bay Uprising and became a symbol of England's need to restore law and order in her colonies at a time of imperial crisis.[96] At this point, Ruskin, who had bought *The Slave Ship* in 1844, must have decided to sell Turner's painting as he found it unbearable to live with. Since no buyer could be found in England, the painting was eventually sold to an American and is now an exhibit of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Paul Gilroy succinctly suggests that the "exile" of the painting "also raises significant questions for the cultural historian as to the apparently un-English nature of its content" ("Art" 51). The history of the painting provides an example for the ways in which such regulatory strategies of nationalist appropriation, such as Ruskin's reading of Turner's painting, turn upon their own omissions and produce alternative readings. Transported across the Atlantic, the painting reenacts what it represents, the brutal journey of the Middle Passage, and haunts the English national imaginary from the colonial margins of the former British Empire. Ironically, the painting's exile signifies the violent ruptures of the British empire Ruskin desperately tried to eradicate from it.

The diction and rhythm of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* imitates the techniques of Turner's *Slave Ship* in order to evoke the same overwhelming emotions of terror in his readers as the painting provokes in its beholders. He writes:

> The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges, the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold, and bathes like blood" (405)

Ruskin's prose makes excessive use of metaphor and fuses the verbal and the visual image to achieve an effect of terror in the reader. The "heaving [. . .] bosom" of the "ocean"

eroticizes the sea through images of female sexuality. The actual tortures of slavery are replaced with "the torture of the storm," a primordial metaphor of natural catastrophe. Idealizing the "fire of the sunset" as a "glorious light," Ruskin once more obscures that in Turner's painting the imperial sun turns a blinding eye towards the corruption and cruelties it causes. The sun of empire indeed sets. With an alliterative climax Ruskin turns the actual blood bath of slavery into a baptismal ritual of national and artistic rebirth, providing the representational blueprint for the imperial imagination and the aesthetic of the sublime. In a final eruption of prose, Ruskin claims that the painting is "based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life" (405). The painting, "true" and "wonderful," fulfills "the perfect system of all truth [. . .] formed by Turner's work" and is "dedicated to [. . .] the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable Sea" (406).

Although Ruskin anticipates the painting's historical tensions when he calls the slaver a "guilty ship" (405), he neutralizes them in the image of an all-powerful and present nature. Power in general and Britain's maritime power in particular appear as natural phenomena, symbolized in the "deathful" and "illimitable" sea. By aestheticizing and sublimating Turner's images of violence and slavery, Ruskin translates Turner's critique of empire into the racially homogeneous and collectively imagined "glorious [. . .] splendour" (405) of the English nation. If Ruskin's intensive use of metaphor transfers actual violence into representational violence to celebrate the originality of Turner's painting and of English national identity, Dabydeen's *Turner* illustrates that the desire for cultural originality is part of an imperial legacy that is at once shaped and eroded by the violence and overdetermination of metaphor. Ruskin's rhetoric is significant to my argument because it transforms the painter J.M.W. Turner into a normative metaphor of imperial power and aesthetic magnificence. In other words, Ruskin translates the name "Turner" into an icon and normative metaphor of imperial power and thereby unwittingly facilitates the name's performative resignifications.

The Moon/Eye Metaphor and "The Parting of Hero and Leander"

In order to explore the disruptive functions of *Turner*'s metaphors in more detail, I want to return to my earlier quotation of the poem's Fragment XII. It begins with the African's awareness that "[t]he sea has brought [him] tribute from many lands" and yet "mocked and beggared" (17) him. The "tribute" is quickly recognized as "counterfeit goods." "[S]crolls in different letterings" and "the babbling / Of dying sailors" (17) become a "means to languages / And the wisdom of other tribes" (17). A grave of sailors and slaves, the sea contains a second Tower of Babel where languages have lost their familiar reference systems in the history of slavery. Obliterated, mixed, and assembled from different countries, from old and new traditions, the creolized languages of the Caribbean, to paraphrase Brathwaite, function as tool and tomb, reflecting the historical discontinuities and paradoxes of Caribbean history. In *Turner*, the imperial legacies of language the African finds in the sea appear as a paradox and generate a silence marked by terror, a negative space without "land" and "voice" (17).

This space of negativity and paradox first occurs in *Turner*'s opening line: "Stillborn from all the signs" (1).[97] The brokenness and silence of the phrase and the image of the stillbirth contrast the abundance of signs and words, of language and representation. On the one hand, the profusion of existing representations of Otherness symbolically forecloses newness and originality conventionally associated with the image of birth. On the other, reading the poem out loud creates a paradoxical blurring of meaning between "stillborn" and "still born," between death and birth. The figure of the paradox, however, is central to Caribbean writing. For example, according to Wilson Harris, a paradox works primarily through a notion of metaphor that defies closure. It refers to parallel time zones and historically unfinished shapes of reality that give access to the half-remembered and half-forgotten traumas of history. The double inscription of "Still/born," then, indicates that Dabydeen's poem articulates identities through various histories,

through a play of lack (stillbirth) and excess (multiplicity of signs) that assigns neither originality nor wholeness to the process of identity formation.

In Fragment XII the paradoxical effects of the stillbirth metaphor reoccur in the metaphor of the moon, an image taken from a fragment of Turner's painting *The Parting of Hero and Leander* (1837). In *Turner*, the moon shines as the "silent / Full eye" (17), indicating simultaneous silence and fullness, lack and excess. Similar to the operations of the Derridean supplement, the paradoxical capacities of the moon metaphor add meaning (fullness) and supplement a lack (silence). Fullness and silence, however, are configurations of the same, namely of the African's and J.M.W. Turner's linked visions of identity. Silence invokes the African's longing for calmness and peace, but actually designates a lack of language that incurs terror. More specifically, the African's desire for new beginnings is inspired by the "silent / Full eye" of the moon, which he takes as a true sign of nature, uninhibited by imperial representations. Yet, derived from a displaced fragment of Turner's painting *The Parting of Hero and Leander*, the silence of the moon is deceptive and obscures that its origins once again lead back to Turner's visual representations of empire. Given that the moon is both a component of Turner's painting and the African's memory before and after the Middle Passage, the fullness of the moon summons the image of an all-seeing eye that will always say more than both Turner's and the African's self-consciousness can perceive.

The split moon metaphor, then, explores the predicament of metaphor, its violent operations of naming and its differential, self-destructive effects.[98] Investigating the space between lack and excess, deferral and difference, the moon metaphor suggests that the infinite self-reproduction of metaphorical operations may either wear out their own subversive potential or produce, in Dabydeen's words, "the possibility of total originality" ("Interview" 29). In the context of postcolonial theory, Bhabha employs the supplementary space between metaphorical lack and excess to articulate his notion of cultural difference and hybridity. Both of these concepts rhetorically work through strategies of repetition

which "terrorize[] authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (*Location* 115). This notion of mimicry implies that identity formation processes are guided by self-conscious and strategic choices that work from within colonial representations of Otherness. The "*ruse* of recognition" presupposes that an act of self-recognition has already taken place and can be used in the service of subversive mimicry. *Turner's* Fragment XII, however, dramatizes the impossibility of strategic choice and underscores that the contradictions within the discourse of empire are constitutive for what Spivak calls the "domesticated other"[99] and the regeneration of imperial ideology. The interactive relation between the verbal and the visual image of the moon shows the ways in which the dead African is entangled in and co-opted by the multiple discourses of imperialism in advance of any possible act of self-recognition.

To the African's perception, the watchful eye of the moon promises the last resort of comfort and serene peacefulness during an existence of utter loss and isolation. The moon's "loneliness and grief" is also the African's loneliness. For years he courted the moon for salvation and memory so that his "dazed mind" could hope to reach "across a distance big beyond even / Turner's grasp." Only the moon still hears his "whisper" over the "vast space" (17) of hope for a creative amnesia. He begs the moon for relief from those fragments of memory that bring back abduction and rape. In the end the African has "even forgotten the words. / Only the moon remains, watchful and loving" (18). While the moon metaphor supplements the lack of memory and provides a foil of identification for the African, it is also marked by an excess of meaning the African cannot decipher. The play of lack and excess literally appears in the reproduction of a fragment of Turner's *The Parting of Hero and Leander*, printed on the opposite page of *Turner's* Fragment XII. The correspondence between the verbal and the visual image of the moon implies that both images function as a simulacrum of each other. The possibility of a creative amnesia or transfiguration quickly fails, because the sea is no uninscribed space of cultural representation from which to begin anew. Indeed, if we recontextualize the fragment of

Turner's painting in its occluded whole, we see that what the African reads as a vast negative space of emptiness and loss harbors the refractions of imperialism and of Western literary history.

Like his *Slave Ship*, Turner's *The Parting of Hero and Leander* comments on the materialist corruption and greed which, according to Turner, cause the decay of empires. The painting is divided into two halves of which one shows an empty ancient city sinking into darkness and a sea of clouds. The other half depicts gigantic waves populated with mythic sea-sprites. The waves tower over the harbor front in a posture of suspension before collapse. The right middle-part of the painting represents the moon hiding behind clouds but illuminating a narrow harbor passage that leads into the open, storm-tossed sea. In the foreground of the painting we see Hero who holds up lanterns to guide her lover Leander back home. The dark and light contrasts of the painting and the suspended chaos of the sea forebode Leander's tragic drowning. The painting's threatening movement of impending collapse and darkness is only interrupted by the moon's ray of light which creates a unity in perspective and controls the composition of the painting.

Dabydeen's *Turner* reprints this image of the moon light with its impression of momentary stillness and its illusion of wholeness and order. The reproduction of the fragment implies a change from the signs of decay and collapse into an almost pastoral staging of the sea, reflecting the African's "fallacious hope," to appropriate Turner's phrase, of originality and blissful belonging. This edited reprint of Turner's initial narrative of turmoil and destruction in *Turner* cites Ruskin's editing practices in his reading of *The Slave Ship*. Yet, it seems to me that *Turner* is less concerned with Ruskin's racist color blindness than with his attempt at naturalizing both Turner's critique of empire and his sufferings that speak through his paintings. Ruskin's appropriation of Turner's *Slave Ship* implies that the conservative establishment of Victorian society regulated and dehumanized social outsiders like J.M.W. Turner.[100] *Turner's* reprint of *The Parting of Hero and*

Leander reminds the reader that the technologies of imperial control ideologically linked the regulation of social outcasts within Victorian society with the management of slavery outside of England's domestic borders.

If the fragment of *The Parting of Hero and Leander* signals the erasure of heterogeneous narratives of empire, we may ask what other narratives are submerged in Turner's painting and were subsequently omitted from both the painting's reproduction in *Turner* and indirectly from the African's consciousness? An answer to this question opens the Pandora's box of English literature. The myth of Hero and Leander has been told and adapted throughout the history of Western literature and visual arts by such visual artists and writers as Rubens, Ovid, Virgil, Musaeus, Keats, Housman, and Marlowe. With regard to the "Hero and Leander"- fragment reproduced In *Turner*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598) designates one of the narratives which may have influenced both Turner's painting and Dabydeen's long poem. While *Turner* is indebted to the generic features of Marlowe's mythographic and erotic brief epic, Turner's painting takes up Marlowe's satirical narrative of commodified sexual and human relationships. We may also argue that Marlowe's erotic metaphors of economic exchange and blackness illustrate the ways in which early modern English identity concepts emerged in conjunction with the commodification of sexuality and its deployment in power discourses. This political legacy of intersecting discourses of sex, power, and race resurfaces in Turner's depiction of the Hero and Leander myth as well as in the perverted and abusive desires of Turner, the captain of *Turner*'s slaver. My point, then, is not to trace *Turner*'s intertextual references, but to show that the dead African's fantasy of new and original beginnings is shaped by a chain of existing representations of Otherness. As a regulatory trope of substitution and sameness, metaphor always returns to the same in the discourse of empire. More specifically, the metaphorical overdetermination of the moon leads the African back to

"Turner's (and other artists')" (ix) practice of using blackness as a representational vehicle for decay, chaos, and corruption.

Both of Turner's paintings *The Parting of Hero and Leander* and *The Slave Ship* emphasize the destruction of empires through a linear and progressive narrative of history. Like other Romantic works of art, Karl Kroeber points out, Turner's paintings speak about the present British Empire in terms of ancient empires. Turner, Kroeber writes, knows that "the British Empire is no more [. . .] at the moment of the Empire's burgeoning [. . .] He foresees the British Empire vanishing into a continuity of history" (325). Turner, thus, does not criticize the idea of empire but rather transforms it into a natural phenomenon of humanity's "universal" history. Turner's metaphysical perspective of history was strongly influenced by Romantic poetry, most notably by James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1746) which establishes British superiority by opposing England's enlightened and ethical principles of government, moral values, social forms of life to the alleged absence of such principles in Westafrican societies.[101] Thomson's poetry also reflects how the enclosures of the English countryside caused significant anxieties and ruptures in the public English consciousness at the onset of British urbanization and industrialization.[102] Turner's image of drowning slaves symbolizes and sublimates these anxieties of social and cultural change and shows that Turner, like later writers and critics of empire, condemned the violent excesses of empire. Yet, Turner's relativist view of history prevented him from imagining an alternative to the idea of empire. If Turner's *Slave Ship* endorses imperialism's overall mission to elevate and civilize those who lack the cultural refinement of the "milder climes" (Thomson 90), is it possible, we may ask, to read the African's identification with the watchful eye of the moon in ways that destabilize Turner's notion of empire? Through a number of reiterations and misquotations of the metaphor of the eye and Turner's name, *Turner*, I suggest, dramatizes and deconstructs the ways in which imperial regulations of sexuality produce both colonial subjects and Victorian Others.

The "savage as child" and "the child as savage": Reiterations of "Turner" and the management of colonial desire

As a surveying and observing eye, the moon metaphor, as I discussed it earlier, primarily operates to regulate the dead African's conscious and unconscious fantasies of originality and transfiguration. The metaphor of the eye, however, already occurs in *Turner's* Fragment II where its ambiguous connotations evoke the vision of a pastoral African past and undermine the African's longing for historical continuity.[103] Following his encounter with the stillborn child, the African wants to invent the "fable" (1) of happy family and childhood memories. Yet, he fails to map his memory with new names for landscapes and animals because this strategy mimics empiricist science the African has learnt "since Turner's days" (2). Further, the African cannot clearly recall concrete events, names, and places.[104] Instead, he remembers the "sound" of milking a cow "that still haunts" him and "survives the roar [. . .] Of waves" (2). This moment of an apparently genuine and solid memory of the past also disrupts the African's pastoral fantasy because he remembers the cow as being both a titillating playmate and a protectress. In this passage, the poem introduces the metaphor of the eye in ambiguously sexual terms: The cow "watches" and "winks" at the children with "covetous eyes" or "a harlot's eye" (3). Linked to children's games, the image of the prostitute foreshadows the pederast lust of Turner and interrupts the circular flow of modern temporality.[105] Laying underneath the cow's "belly," the children feel protected while waiting for the European intruders to "burn the huts, stampede the goats, / Drag girls away by ropes" (3) like cattle. The abrupt turn from play to violence, from epic splendor to the crude enumeration of violent acts recalls the disruptive experience of the Middle Passage. The contradictory association of the cow's "harlot's eye" with its protective belly destabilizes the African's vision of continuous historical time.

Writing from within the disjunctive time frame of postcolonial modernity, *Turner* examines the ways in which the sexual energies of Turner's sublime painting and the construction of cultural difference intersect. While classical as well as recent critics of the

sublime agree that the aesthetic effects of the sublime largely depend on what appears to be unrepresentable,[106] postcolonial critics argue that the unrepresentable of the sublime both embodies and erases the violence of the Middle Passage from the dominant narratives of modernity. Paul Gilroy conceptualizes the temporal gap in the discourse of modernity as a specific "diaspora temporality" he calls the "Slave Sublime" (*Black* 191). "[T]he modern world," he writes, is

> fragmented along axes constituted by racial conflict and [can] accommodate non-synchronous, heterocultural modes of social life in close proximity. . . [Black artists'] conceptions of modernity [. . .] were founded on the catastrophic rupture of the middle passage rather than the dream of revolutionary transformation. They were punctuated by the processes of acculturation and terror that followed that catastrophe and by the countercultural aspirations towards freedom, citizenship, and autonomy that developed after it among slaves and their descendants. (197)

The common denominator of Gilroy's notion of the "Slave Sublime" and classical concepts of the sublime is the experience of terror. In contrast to the classical idea that terror is an effect of the sublime, Gilroy understands racist terror as both the cause of the sublime and the central element of a black conceptualization of modernity. Although Gilroy's "Slave Sublime" illustrates the ways in which racial terror informs the classical aesthetic of the sublime, it does not fully explain the seductive and, frequently, erotic power sublime representations of terror—despite their perverted violence—exercise on readers and viewers.

Further, Gilroy's analysis gives little consideration to the ways in which the sexual energies inscribed in the aesthetic of the sublime mirror the Victorian project of colonizing bodies and minds within and outside England's boundaries during the beginning stages of modernity. In her study *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Stoler criticizes Foucault's *History of Sexuality* for "short-circuiting empire" (7). She argues that the construction of bourgeois identities must be read through a discourse of sexuality that "cannot be charted in Europe alone" (7). Instead, by way of contrast the "racialized" colonial body defined the "'healthy, vigorous, bourgeois body'" (7). More importantly, discourses of sexuality were racially coded and defined "marginal members of the

[Victorian] body politic" (7) in order to articulate who had and who did not have the right to claim a certain national and middle-class identity. In other words, prostitutes, hysterical women, and people suffering from a mental illness were often described in sexual and racial terms and drew what Stoler calls the "'interior frontiers' of national communities" (7). Thus, the idea of a unified bourgeois self could only be articulated against the role "Europe's external and internal 'others' played" (Stoler 194) in the interwoven discourses of race, sexuality, and empire. In *Turner*, the reiteration of the eye metaphor and of Turner's name examines the ways in which J.M.W. Turner's progressive critique of empire remains tied to racial and social classifications of national identity. They show how Turner's *Slave Ship* translates the terror of both the sexual regulation and racialization of empire's "historical Others" (Stoler 195) into the aesthetic of the sublime.

The various textual circulations of the name "Turner" produce a number of "historical Others." In his interview with Maya Jaggi, Dabydeen says he "made Turner symbolically a child abuser. [. . .] It's a metaphor for dependency and power." Conceptualized as a metaphor for child abuse, the name Turner refers to the paternalistic and abusive power relations between the mother-country and its various colonies perceived as children and the representation of the slave as child. *Turner* dramatizes the dependency relations that govern the Victorian slave/child metaphor through the sado-masochistic sexual violations captain Turner inflicts upon the black children aboard of his slaver. The poem's multiple reiterations of the name "Turner" stage the ways in which the slave/child metaphor can be used to identify and manage colonial desire. In *Turner*, the name Turner belongs to the painter, to Dabydeen's poem, to the stillborn child, to all "the one's / With golden hair" (8), and to Christ who is "Turner nailed to a tree" (25). Similar to the African's "father" who "count[s] beads at the end of each day," Turner, the captain of the slaver, "multipl[ies] percentages" (18) to count his profits from the slave trade. In several ways, the name "Turner" embodies the law-of-the-father and that of colonial violence and order. For example, the African can still distinguish the men "[w]ith golden hair" from

other drowned men, because the silver of their boot buckles survives the sea and the "sharks" (8), evoking images of military discipline, violent blows, and kicking feet. Playing on the word "return" and the idiom "to turn a profit," the name "Turner" clearly alludes to the postcolonial predicaments of exile and home—as I have discussed them in the context of *Omeros*—and to the neocolonial cultural and economic exploitation of non-white people.

The memory of violence creates a link between past and present racialized and sexualized discourses of the nation. Referring to the stillborn child and a child abuser, the name Turner alludes to the Victorian practice of controlling children's sexuality and regulating deviant forms of sexuality to constitute a racially homogeneous bourgeois national Self. J.M.W. Turner's documented preference for children's company may reflect both the symbolic objectification of children in the discourse of national identity formation and Turner's own attempt at sublimating his sexual desires. The slave/child metaphor reflects both of these normalizing practices the idealization and objectification of children. In a perverted way, the slave/child metaphor at once translates and incorporates the paternalistic Romantic utopia of children as being the fathers of men into an imperial utopia of white suprematism. Yet, children's autoerotic sexuality and their close contact with servants, as Stoler suggests, also threatened to undermine this utopia, posing a potential danger of social and racial pollution. Thus, children and slaves were disciplined 'for their own benefit' as well as for the greater good of society and the success of the imperial mission of civilization. While J.M.W. Turner's paintings testify the painter's belief in this mission, the reiteration of his name in *Turner* brings into the open the various intersecting psychological and discursive elements that made this belief possible.

To portray J.M.W. Turner as the miserly, greedy, and sadomasochistic slave trader and pederast recalls Turner's stinginess with money and his love for children with whom, according to Lindsay's Turner biography, he got along better than with adults. Turner's fondness of children agrees with the image of the benevolent and paternalistic colonial

master. Further, it also points at Turner's own unresolved social and sexual desires that made him an Other in Victorian society. Lindsay observes that Turner's "images of natural violence can be related to the world outside, [. . .] [but] also represent the demented mother in her spasms of hate and torment" (95). Turner's attitude toward art and sexuality was riven, as Lindsay explains, by "a keen anxiety and that he had to keep on driving down or evading a fear of madness" (94). He suffered a "repressed guilt-sense" for having hospitalized his mother as well as for coming from a family plagued and destroyed by his mother's mental disintegration.[107] He sublimated his guilt and anxiety by replacing his physical mother with the symbolic mother of the Royal Academy, "on which he continued passionately to beget his countless art children" (94). Having expelled the abject body of his mother, and thus his own, from his consciousness, Turner was unable to form viable relationships with women. Instead, as Lindsay suggests, he found "satisfaction only in a socially-guilty (adulterous or promiscuous) connexion" (94). His fear of insanity[108] seemed to have been strongly regulated by a death drive through which Turner imagined himself to be the "art mother finally" buried together with his paintings, his "art children." This fantasy, I think, depicts the nodal point at which the figures of Turner, the painter, and Turner, the child-abusing captain of the slaver converge. In the sado-masochistic pleasure of imagining the joint death of himself as the disembodied mother with her art children, Turner at once undertakes an act of sexual self-disciplining and makes children the objects of his incestuous desire to merge with what he has created. With this fantasy of death, as Lindsay suggests, Turner achieves "[t]he escape from a difficult and disturbing reality [. . .]. Womb had become tomb, and vice versa. The desired relationship of harmony and peace had been won, but at the cost of giving up all struggle. The self-sufficient sphere was complete and finally isolated" (95), and the regimented Victorian body was successfully installed. Lindsay's critical Turner biography, then, helps us situate Turner as one of England's "historical Others" who returns in Dabydeen's poem to refract

the dominant narrative of the English nation not from the margins but from the center of English art.

Lindsay's Turner biography, which Dabydeen mentions in his "Acknowledgments," implicitly relates Turner's life to the Victorian technologies of sexuality and power. As we know from Foucault, sexuality was not so much repressed than it was an omnipresent discourse that constructed objects of knowledge and imposed a system of self-discipline that helped establishing class, gender, and psychological hierarchies within Victorian society. According to Foucault, images of the mad hysteric, the prostitute, or of any individual with "deviant" desires signify such objects of dominant knowledge production and mark these figures as a threat to a homogeneously conceived national community. Sexuality, as Foucault explains, was "not [. . .] an exterior domain to which power is applied" but "a result and instrument of power's design" (152). In this context, Turner's fear of madness expresses a fear of being socially declassified while constantly striving to overcome his own poor class background. More importantly, Turner's anxiety and sense of guilt entail self-disciplining acts that normalize the body as a site of subjection and power production. Turner's own "deviant" desires, then, may not merely symbolize a repressed sexuality. Instead, they suggest an attempt to conform to the norms of a healthy, clean, bourgeois body through acts of self-beratement and self-erasure. Lindsay's comment that Turner finally achieved "harmony and peace," "self-sufficiency" in isolation implies that Turner subjected himself to or was subjected to regulatory and self-disciplining discourses of sexuality. In other words, Turner eventually complied to the principles of the disembodied yet deeply divided individual bourgeois Self.

The price Turner had to pay for this domesticated bourgeois Self was, as Lindsay suggests, "complete and final[] isolat[ion]" (95). Yet, the socially sanctified disavowal of the body not only leads to utter isolation and self-denial, but it also generates a violent psychic excess that informs Turner's techniques of cultural representation. More specifically, in the splitting of Turner's bourgeois Self, the body, in Francis Barker's

words, is censored as a "rootless thing of madness and scandal" and forced into an object position which can then be "pressed into service"(67) of artistic sublimation. Yet, the regulatory practice of censoring the body as a positive site of identification also generates an excess of meaning that lies beyond conscious legibility. In contrast to Barker, however, Stoler, as I discussed it earlier, argues that the biopolitics of Victorian sexuality cannot be read outside the racialized grammar it employs and generates. Thus, Turner's attempts to escape social marginalization and to discipline his body accordingly cannot be simply read as an act of repression. Instead, they contribute to the construction and ordering of imperial class and race relations.

Although the discourse of empire regulates both the deviant Victorian and the black body, this should not lead to the conclusion that both of these bodies were in any way equal. In *Turner*, the effects of disciplining and repressing the body are not, as Robert Hyam suggests, merely transferred into and excessively realized in the colonies. Such an argument presupposes the repression of sexual drives as the main incentive for colonial expansion and assumes a clear separation between colonial and non-colonial spaces. The governing discourses of imperialism, as *Turner* shows, are played out within and outside England's national boundaries and are based on the successful integration of desire into the imperial project. This assumes, as Stoler explains, that "people themselves believed in the sexual codes of the moralizing state [and that] personal affect and sentiments could be harnessed to national projects and priorities for racial regeneration" (136).

If Turner's paintings display the successful integration of colonial desire into the national mission of empire, then this process of integration, as *Turner* dramatizes it, also signifies a violent sexual transgression enacted through and on the black body. At night on board of the slaver, captain Turner physically and mentally coerces the slave boys into complete submission. He

> gave selflessly the nipple
> Of his tongue until we learnt to say profitably
> In his own language, *we desire you, we love*

> *You, we forgive you.* He whispered eloquently
> Into our ears even as we wriggled beneath him,
> Breathless with pain
> [. . . . .]
> He fished us patiently,
> Obsessively, until our stubbornness gave way
> To an exhaustion more complete than Manu's
> [. . . . .]
> And we repeated in a trance the words
> That shuddered from him: *blessed, angelic,*
> *Sublime*; words that seemed to flow endlessly
> From him, filling our mouths and bellies
> Endlessly. (38)

In this passage acts of physical and representational violence link Turner, the captain of the slaver, with Turner, the painter. The violent imposition of the English language and the language of the sublime symbolically transform captain Turner's slave children into the painter's art children, literally inseminating them with both the painter's and the imperialist's fantasy of a primitive utopia.

J.M.W. Turner's desire to begin again beyond the corruption of civilization, beyond the fallacies of hope, perfectly translates into the child/slave metaphor. Saturated with the Romantic discourse of childhood, his desire, as the desire of earlier English explorers and conquerors of the New World, longs for a new beginning of human history built on innocence, naive wisdom, and the unfettered imagination. Simultaneously, the mythologies of childhood, as Marina Warner observes, assign children "all kinds of transgressive pleasures, including above all the sado-masochistic thrills of fear" (40). For Turner, inflicting violence can be legitimated as a civilizing act which, in his imagination, causes necessary pain and is rewarded with the pleasures of enlightenment and cultural refinement. The pleasure of sado-masochism is suddenly transferred from the aggressor to the victim. What is equally important, however, is that Turner successfully integrates his own sentiments into the national project of imperial civilization. In this combined national and aesthetic project slave children can turn into "art children" who, in Stoler's words, become "heirs" not only to their parents (the legacy of J.M.W. Turner) but also to "the

national patrimony and to the race" (144). Today, the latter characterizes the iconographic value of Turner's painting in the narrative of the English nation.

By demanding a repeated confirmation of affection from his victims, captain Turner wants to legitimize and to naturalize the violent authority he exercises. This strategy recalls Butler's argument that authority is established through the reiteration and "deferral of authority to an irrecoverable past" (*Bodies* 108). By requesting the children to reiterate his own "teachings," Turner defers and links his authority, initially based on violent coercion, to the aesthetic of sublime art. J.M.W. Turner, we remember, considers the sublime as an artistic expression of the eternal and natural repetitions of an irrecoverable history, a history that can only be visually captured by making it appear to be unrepresentable. In *Turner*, then, this transference of authority from physical violation to aesthetic sublimation of violence effects a deliberate "structured forgetting"(Barker 23) of history and thus obscures Turner's historical role in the production of England as a unified national community.

In his study *The Tremulous Private Body* (1984), Barker discusses the ways in which the heterosexual and individual modern body gradually emerges through mechanisms of repression and erasure over several periods of Western literary history. He suggests that from Shakespearean times onwards "corporeal images [. . .] have become dead metaphors for us - by a structured forgetting rather than by innocent historical wastage - [and] are the indices of a social order in which the body has a central and irreducible place" (23). His reference to the relation between language ("dead metaphors") and the body is crucial to my study, because it recalls both Nietzsche's and Derrida's notion of the effaced physical figure that constitutes metaphor. It seems to me that Barker elaborates the political and social discourses that construct the body and make dead metaphors legible as seemingly neutral elements of language that mark sites of disavowal and forgetting. In this context, dead metaphors reveal how identities are produced over time through a process of remembering and forgetting. *Turner* reiterates the name "Turner" to resignify it as a dead metaphor of the English national imagination. The various citations and recontextualizations

of the name facilitate an archeology of the exclusive operations of English national self-identification. As a dead metaphor, the name "Turner" enters the discourse of nation narration as an icon of the nation from which all of Turner's previous acts of violence have disappeared. Thus, to force the children to repeat "*blessed, angelic, / Sublime*" establishes Turner's law of cultural representation as being authoritative.

While captain Turner inverts the relation between aggressor and victim in his exercise of sado-masochistic violence, he also gains satisfaction from violating the black children. As a sexual and psychic practice of subjection, sadism seeks to absorb the freedom and difference of the Other. The sadist wants to strip the body of the Other in order to discover his own. His object is the willing surrender and incorporation of the Other into Self. Captain Turner's pleasures, therefore, consist in exorcising difference and consuming guilt and conflict. These practices of sadistic incorporation and transfiguration of the Other into the Self correspond to J.M.W. Turner's techniques of the sublime. While Turner's paintings harmonize the contradictions of empire, Dabydeen's *Turner* makes them legible. In fact, if we consider that, according to the drowned African, the sea produces merely "counterfeit goods" (17), we can read J.M.W. Turner's imperial paintings as forged representations of the imperial Self and colonial Other. Like Captain Turner's slave boys, these representations have been "fished [. . .] patiently" (38) and profitably from the sea of slavery. Dabydeen's dramatization of *The Slave Ship*, then, illustrates that the harmonizing effects of Turner's art—one of Britain's most cherished cultural capital—are deceptive. For these effects are produced through the pornographic fantasies of empire, the simultaneous fetishization and violation of the black body.

If Turner's paintings fuse the fragmented political and psychological conditions of imperial identity formation into a transcendental image of the arbitrary and eternal power of nature, Dabydeen's poem discloses Turner's notion of the sublime as a Western master narrative which legitimates and constructs the enslaved black body. Through the techniques of the sublime, the obliterated black body returns in an aestheticized and sublimated version

to construct harmony out of the ambiguous effects entailed in managing colonial desire. The sadistic pleasures that form the core of this operation cause the effects of awe and terror the beholder of a sublime painting experiences and identifies with. To create harmony out of his own sense of guilt and psychic traumas, J.M.W. Turner hoped to end all struggle with the regulatory power apparatus of Victorian England by envisioning his death as a communion with his paintings. The death he wished for, however, was a death that happened elsewhere, on the slavers and in the colonies of empire. The vision of his own death and that of slaves on sea spurred Turner's imagination and allowed him to contain the otherwise unmanageable contradictions of the Self and the nation's socio-political life. *Turner*, then, brilliantly captures the dynamics of the imperial imagination[109] by translating Turner's "art children" into abused black children.

Productive Sites of Power: Metaphor and Prostitution

Turner's configurations of the moon- and child/slave-metaphor confirm that in the discourse of empire metaphor is a historically and politically overdetermined trope. At the same time, these metaphors reveal the instability of power relations. For example, if both of these metaphors produce a narrative of sexually and racially normalized identities, they also show that the imperial technologies of sexuality and race produced historical Others who threaten to undermine the perceived homogeneity of the newly constructed Victorian bourgeois and national Self. For this reason, metaphor provides a useful device through which to read the contradictions of both colonial and postcolonial forms of representation.

The moon-metaphor, as I have discussed it earlier, appears in the dead African's fabricated childhood memories as the cow's "harlot's eye" (3) and gains further sexualized inflections through its circulation in the discourse of imperial violence. In *Turner*'s narrative, the theme of the harlot or prostitute reoccurs in several configurations in which the body functions as a surface rather than as a vehicle of depth and truth that waits to be discovered. As a frequently used meta-metaphor in the classical discourses of rhetoric, the

metaphor of the prostitute also invites a reading of *Turner*'s self-referential dramatization of language. Further, insofar as both J.M.W. Turner and the figure of the prostitute designate those Victorian Others who were socially regulated yet instrumental for the formation of the self-disciplined Victorian bourgeois subject, the metaphor of the prostitute intersects with the governing discourses of *Turner*. *Turner*, I suggest, does not contest that the dominant historical discourses inscribed in and produced by the metaphor of the prostitute mark metaphor as a totalizing trope. Rather, by transferring this metaphor into various contexts of power production, *Turner* emphasizes the need to negate metaphorical meaning and, thus, to interrupt the endless process of metaphorical transfiguration.

The metaphor of the prostitute initially emerges from the African's invented memories and signifies his misconceived identification with Turner. Inventing "Words of [his] own dreaming and those that Turner / Primed in [his] mouth," the African's mind becomes a "garment of invention." One of the birds circling around him strikes him as "arrogant in beauty, feathers / Blown loose" and he names it "Tanje after the strumpet / Of [his] village" (14). The memory of Tanje, whether invented or real, triggers a short moment of self-recognition in which the African names himself and turns the notion of historical depth or content into an image of bodily surfaces. The sea, the force of history, has "bleached [him] [. . .] of colour, / Painted [him] gaudy, dabs of ebony, / An arabesque of blues and vermilions, / Sea-quats cling to [his] body like gorgeous / Ornaments. [He] has become the sea's whore, / Yielding" (14). Similar to the techniques of priming a canvas, imperial representations of the Other have already "primed" the African's mind, establishing an invisible but functional depth of historical meaning. More specifically, the dead African functions as an aesthetic feature in Turner's painting, as a vehicle of hidden meanings which are coded in terms of the racialized body. In art criticism, however, the aesthetic aspects of a visual work of art, Gilroy reminds us, "are particularly close to the surface of individual judgements" ("Art" 46) and establish the universal value of a painting regardless of its cultural conditions of production. As my discussion of Ruskin's appraisal

of *The Slave Ship* shows, these judgments are by no means universal but encumbered in questions of race and racial difference. The African's body, then, has been reduced to an "ornament," a decorative emblem and conduit in the imperial discourse of art and race: It can be traded as an object of imperial desire, as the "sea's whore" who pools and transfers unspoken and forbidden sexual and aesthetic pleasures.

In their earliest conception, ornaments were called *grotteska* and showed animals, plants, and human images without adhering to realist conventions of representation. They presented unfinished forms in an unstable world, an incomplete metamorphosis of birth and death.[110] Later, in the early Renaissance, the notion of "transformation," and thus of the ornament, was associated with sexual mutilation and the bisexual body of Hermaphroditos. *Turner*'s metaphors of the "sea's whore" and the "ornament" explicitly emphasize that processes of transformation are unfinished and take place on the surface of the body. Skin and hair color can be bleached; the body itself is a "garment[] of invention" and becomes an ornament that does not possess a specific race and gender. The body is not a natural and organic receptacle of sacred meanings but a living surface on and through which to produce history and power. The body, to recall Butler, functions as a site of possibilities for the performative translation of historical meanings. More specifically, through their association with surfaces and physical violence, the metaphors of the ornament and the prostitute operate performatively. By foregrounding the ways in which classical discourses of the body and of rhetoric inform each other, these metaphors cite and resignify the functions of metaphor itself. These discourses employ both metaphors to obscure their inherent instability of meaning production.

Introducing the opposition between *res* (things, matter, thoughts) and *verba* (words) as constitutive elements of rhetoric, Quintilian establishes a distinction between proper (*res*) and metaphorical or transposed(*verba*) meaning. Although Quintilian initially valorizes both terms equally, his notion of transposed meaning, as Todorov observes, contains a division between those tropes that help to clarify meaning and those that serve to

adorn and, thus, to obscure meaning. Metaphor falls in the latter category and was therefore considered dangerous by Quintilian and later rhetoricians. In Todorov's words, these rhetoricians "claim to value only discourse that serves to inform, discourse unadorned with useless embellishments, discourse [. . .] that goes unnoticed" (72). Yet, by eliminating the vital rhetorical elements of *verba* from their own practices, rhetoricians separated discourse from rhetoric, literal from poetic functions of language, introducing a fundamental contradiction into the practice of rhetoric. This contradiction leads them, as Todorov argues," [to] practice[rhetoric] henceforth with a guilty conscience" (73). The exclusion of metaphor from the order of rhetoric, however, returns to disrupt this order in the form of a moralizing, gendered, and racialised discourse on metaphor in which the operative modes and properties of metaphor are likened to those of a prostitute.

This particular discourse of rhetoric articulates its own critique of metaphor through another metaphor by arguing that the instability and ambiguity of metaphor equals the presumably moral and sexual promiscuity of a prostitute. Like a prostitute, a woman, or a slave, metaphor must be restrained and pressed into the service of unequivocal meaning production. The explicitly sexist and racist language that characterizes the rhetorical analogy between metaphor and the prostitute also speaks, to use Todorov's words, of a different "guilty consciousness" of the classical rhetoricians, namely of their failure to fully control the racial and sexual Other their discourse produces. Derrida's and de Man's readings of metaphor, as I have discussed it in Part I of my study, emphasize the destabilizing role of metaphor in the historical discourses of rhetoric and Western philosophy at length. Rather than repeating this discussion, I wish to emphasize that the theoretical predicament of metaphor has been coded in sexual and racialized terms. This emphasis allows me to argue that *Turner's* metaphor of the prostitute cites and resignifies those discourses of power that made metaphor a master trope in the first place.

The analogy between a metaphor and a prostitute, then, depends on establishing a relationship between the functions of language and that of the body through a binary

division and valorization of content versus form, insides (thoughts, ideas) versus outsides (words). The analogy evolves from the classical aesthetic notion of beauty in which a natural unadorned body gives more pleasure than an ornamented body so that, as Cicero puts it, "'only elegance and neatness will remain'" (qtd. in Todorov 74). In the same vein, only unadorned speech achieves the clarity that is true to the idea or the thought it tries to convey. "Rhetorical ornaments," Todorov writes, correspond to "the adornements of the body. [. . .] Ideas are like bones and veins; words, like flesh, fluids, and skin" (73). In this sense, metaphor both clothes and unveils the body in a gesture of control. In Turner's metaphor of the "sea's whore" we can read this double movement of metaphor differently. History prostitutes the African, signaling the traffic in colonial desires and economic exploitation. Yet, the poem transfers this act of metaphorisation onto both the African's dead and the stillborn child's absent body. As a corollary, the power of metaphor to reveal a deep-seated truth, namely the authority of imperial representation, is frustrated. The absence of the body does not necessarily suggest an absence of metaphor. Rather, the absent body symbolically refuses metaphorical synthesis and divests metaphor of its inscribed historical meanings: Metaphorical transfiguration turns into the disfigurement of metaphor. This kind of incomplete metamorphosis, however, is not a mere process of literalization because, as Turner's metaphors of the "sea-whore" and the "ornament" illustrate, there is no original, literal meaning hidden and to be discovered in metaphor. We do not find the interior and internalized ideals and truths of history. Instead, the surfaces of forms produce meaning and dissolve metaphor's binary divisions into inside and outside, tenor and vehicle.

The metaphor of the "sea's whore" activates a discourse of metaphor in which metaphor itself is subject to moral regulation and obliteration. The "perversion" of metaphor, its promiscuity of meaning, emerges from two consecutive arguments in the classical discourse of rhetoric. Both arguments suggest that normative conceptualizations of metaphor cannot be severed from a white, male practice of rhetoric. The first states that

metaphor or ornamented discourse is an expression of moral decay and sexual licentiousness. In classical rhetoric, according to Todorov, "ornamented discourse is the male courtesan," a cross-dressing man, parading in the "glaring make-up" of an "easy woman" (Kant qtd. in Todorov 74). Envisioned as an effeminized man, as the stereotypical colonial image of both male slaves and East Indian men, metaphor also refers to a rhetorical style of "'bombastic, Asiatic, redundant[, and] [. . .] excessive repetition[s]'" (Quintilian qtd. in Todorov 75). By way of contrast the discursive production of metaphor symbolically aligns classical rhetoric with a healthy, white, male body. Thus, the sexualized and racialized meta-metaphor of the prostitute safeguards the notion of rhetoric as a discourse committed to the production of truth, forthrightness, and masculine virility. The second argument, linked to such rhetoricians as Augustine, compares the act of reading metaphors with that of undressing women. In this context, the value of metaphor/ woman consists in being guaranteed "to arrive in the end at the body itself" (Todorov 76). The desire to remove clothing or to decipher metaphorical meanings posits the body as the object and container of hidden truths that must be revealed. And here both arguments converge, for the unveiled woman/metaphor is an indecent woman, a prostitute.

The underlying fear of these attempts at negating and defaming metaphor is, as Todorov remarks, that "[r]hetorical ornamentation changes the sex of discourse" (75) and that metaphor may come to function as a "transvestite" (74) who disturbs the given orders of authority in the dominant discourses of representation. Subsequently, the normative effects of metaphor depend on presupposing that truth is generated through the hiding and revealing of specific meanings, through the construction and erasure of a natural body as carrier of metaphorical operations. Turner's metaphor of the "sea's whore," however, refuses to yield this preconceived body on which to project endless representations of Self and Other. Instead, it emphasizes both metaphor and the body as surfaces that dispense with received divisions into internal meaning and outside appearance, content and form, depth and shallowness. In this way, the discursive production of metaphor and of the

African's body become legible as artifices of history. The transference of identity formation from the site of nature to that of the artifice presents a crucial element in postcolonial narratives. "Such a displacement," Chow suggests, "has the effect of emptying "meaning" from its conventional space - the core, the depth, or the inside waiting to be seen and articulated - and reconstructing it in a new locus - the locus of the surface, which not only shines but *glosses*; which looks, stares, and speaks" (*Primitive* 150).

By naming himself the "sea's whore," the African resignifies the embellishing functions of metaphor without giving it a structure of depth. In the poem this rearticulation of metaphor generates a conceptual void that allows us to read the African's body in terms of surface phenomena that make previous ascriptions of gender and race accessible to resignification. In this sense the strategies of rhetorical negation that punctuate Dabydeen's text resemble a necessary act of destruction that facilitates postcolonial agency. *Turner*'s Fragment XXI contemplates how one can learn to live with a future that has symbolically already been written by imperial history. "[I]n the future time," we read, "each must learn to live / Beadless in a foreign land; or perish. / Or each must learn to make new jouti, / Arrange them by instinct, imagination [. . .] Each / will be barren of ancestral memory / But each endowed richly with such emptiness / From which to dream, surmise, invent, immortalise" (33). Once again, the embellishing properties of metaphor are vital to cultural survival. One must "make new jouti" [pearl necklaces] and rethink metaphor in terms of surfaces, artifices, and emptiness because neither can one return to an "ancestral memory" nor live outside the regulatory effects of history and representation. *Turner*'s rhetoric of negativity suggests that by reconceptualizing metaphor in terms other than its inside/outside, content/form binarisms, it may be possible to dissolve those practices of rhetorical depth that mark imperial forms of representation.

Chapter 10

M.G. Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets*: Metaphor and Historiography

On November 18th, 1998, Moyez Vassanji read from his then latest novel *The Book of Secrets* (1994) at the Canadian literature festival in Berlin. The date and place of the reading were a fitting setting for the novel's themes of national belonging, migration, and intersecting colonial histories. In 1884 Berlin hosted the Congo Conference during which the European colonial powers arbitrarily divided the African continent into colonial protectorates, introducing artificial national borders and enclosures. The political repercussions of this pivotal event in the history of colonialism have been neo-colonial economic dependency, racial wars, ethnic persecution, and massive migration movements across the globe. Vassanji's novel explores the long-term effects caused by England's and Germany's race for colonial control over Tanzania and Kenya, formerly German and English East Africa, before and after the First World War. While Berlin, as the place of Vassanji's reading, pointed at the interwoven patterns of colonial history, the particular date of his reading almost coincided with Canada's Remembrance Day. During his reading Vassanji questioned whether Remembrance Day included the memory of the thousands of victims the First World War demanded in East Africa.

Although *The Book of Secrets* hardly refers to Canada, it nevertheless invites a number of questions that are pertinent to the ways in which ethnic Canadian writing challenges the construction of Canada as a multicultural nation. First, we may ask, in what ways does the novel employ the scenario of the First World War to rewrite Canada's history of multiculturalism? Second, how does Vassanji's novel dramatize the specific metaphor of the book to produce alternative histories of colonial authority and resistance? And finally, how does the historiographical narrative of Vassanji's novel intersect with and

differ from some of the Canadian traditions of writing? These questions will guide my reading of Vassanji's novel.

To deal with these questions requires us to examine the ways in which *The Book of Secrets* employs metaphor as a strategy of ethnic historiographical writing. The historiographical narrative of Vassanji's novel, as I read it, is closely related to what Mary Louise Pratt calls "autoethnographic texts." Such texts are not "'authentic' or autochthonous forms of self-representation [. . .]. Rather autoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror." Not only do such autoethnographic texts provide a native response to colonial representations of the colonized, but they also "constitute a group's point of entry into metropolitan culture" (7-8). By reconstructing the history of a colonial diary from the perspective of the "colonized" without authenticating this perspective, Fernandes engages in autoethnographic writing. If colonial diaries historically functioned as instruments of recording and administrating native life, Fernandes's narrative appropriates the idiom of the colonial diary as a versatile metaphor that gradually unravels the instability of colonial power. However, in contrast to Pratt's understanding of autoethnographic writing, I propose that ethnic historiographical writing, such as Vassanji's novel, often erodes the division between distinct colonial or "metropolitan" and peripheral cultures. For some of the novel's characters the colonial diary indeed connotes, in Pratt's words, a "point of entry into metropolitan culture." Yet, for those characters directly involved with the diary's history, the diary signifies both colonial victimization and perpetual migration within and outside the colonies. Vassanji's novel suggests that the experience of colonialism is a fundamentally diasporic experience that generates cross-cultural identifications. The recurrence of the book metaphor in Vassanji's novel implies that the various encounters and displacements of different cultures in colonial spaces have produced those ideas of nationhood and cultural authenticity that are usually considered as originating in metropolitan spaces. Ethnic historiographical writing,

then, is not restricted to a restaging of the colonial encounter, but it traces the formation of diasporic identities.

The ethnic historiographical narrative of *The Book of Secrets*, then, evolves from the novel's book metaphor. My thesis is that the metaphor of the book works performatively because it challenges the received division of metaphor into tenor and vehicle and generates a cross-cultural reading of the effects of colonialism. As I have argued in the previous chapters, a performative metaphor mediates agency from within the constraints of power. Yet, rather than mimicking given power structures, performative metaphors reiterate and disidentify their operative modes and effects. In short, performative metaphors foreground the contradictions that mark the operations of power without dissolving them. Vassanji's novel, I suggest, initially links the production of colonial power to the discovery of a colonial diary. In the course of the novel's narrative, however, the various reappearances and circulations of this diary facilitate the reconstruction of colonial history through a cross-cultural perspective and, ultimately, produce the book we hold in our hands. The retrospective construction of the diary's history gives the diary a secondary life,[111] a life that follows the diary's immediate colonial context and facilitates Fernandes's historiographical narrative. Like Dabydeen's *Turner*, *The Book of Secrets* reclaims history in order to reinvent the future in diasporic terms. Furthermore, if the diary dramatizes the instability of colonial power relations, we need to examine the limits of the diary's readability. While I do not suggest that a performative understanding of metaphor miraculously solves the trope's dialectical and homogenizing tendencies, I do propose that a performative notion of metaphor generates productive reading practices. In the particular context of Vassanji's novel, a performative reading of metaphor engenders a critique of such dominant postcolonial tropes of resistance as mimicry and foregrounds the historical continuities between colonial discourses of power and multicultural forms of nation narration.

By tracing, as the narrator of Vassanji's novel puts it, the various "secretive trail[s]" (8) of the colonial diary or book metaphor, we can examine the ways in which Vassanji's novel invites its readers to think cultural identity across national boundaries. My reading of *The Book of Secrets* is divided into three sections. In order to establish a historical and critical context for my reading, in the first section I briefly outline and compare the plot lines and organizing metaphors in Vassanji's first novel, *The Gunny Sack* (1989), with those in *The Book of Secrets*. The second section reads Vassanji's book metaphor through Bhabha's essay "Signs taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817." In this section I argue that a performative reading of metaphor challenges the dominance of mimicry as a trope of colonial resistance. The third and concluding section of my discussion focuses on Mariamu, the central female character of the novel who steals the colonial diary. The theft of the diary and Mariamu's unsolved murder pose questions about the boundaries of legibility inscribed in Vassanji's book metaphor. The repeated citations of the metaphor of the book, I argue in my conclusion, generate the novel's self-reflexive historiographical narrative in ways that situate the novel both within and outside some traditions of Canadian writing.

Booking the Past

At the beginning of Vassanji's first novel, *The Gunny Sack*, Salim Juma, the narrator, inherits his grandaunt's old gunny sack, a keepsake filled with various objects and mementos of his family history. Named and personified as "Shehrbanoo," the gunny sack prompts, and sometimes intervenes into, Salim's narrative. Drawing from the oral history of his people, Salim reconstructs both his own family history and the collective history of Tanzania's African Asian community. The episodic stories he tells follow the history of South Asian people in East Africa. Salim's narrative records a series of historical events: German colonization; the British mandate over Tanganyikan territory after the First World War; the Mau Mau rebellion; Tanganyika's independence movement under Julius

Nyere's Uhuru movement in 1961; the political bond between Zanzibar and Tanganyika that formed Tanzania in 1964; the expulsion and persecution of Asian Africans from Uganda under Idi Amin in 1972; and the subsequent exodus and dispersal of Asian Africans across the world. These events, which also serve as the historical frame for *The Book of Secrets*, provide the background for a family genealogy founded on an illegitimate and interracial liaison between Govindji, Salim's great grandfather, and the black slave woman Bibi Taratibu. The unacknowledged son, who results from this relationship and disappears when Govindji marries an Asian woman, becomes Govindji's lost African son. His obsessive and futile search for his vanished son leads into a shameful family scandal and the unsolved murder of Govindji. At the same time, Govindji's failed search for unequivocal African roots symbolizes the historically isolated position of African Asians in African society at large, a position which Charles Sarvan calls a "double solitude" (512).

Echoing some of the concerns of *The Gunny Sack*, *The Book of Secrets* is set in contemporary Dar es Salaam and begins with the discovery of a colonial diary that belonged to the British colonial administrator Alfred Corbin, who came to Dar in 1913. For the novel's narrator Fernandes, an immigrant living in Dar and retired history teacher, the diary becomes the occasion for tracing the largely unwritten history of the small Asian African community of Kikono, a fictional town set at the border between former German and British East Africa. Through various oral narratives, proverbs, letters, newspaper clippings, and Fernandes's interpretation of the diary several stories emerge. One of them focuses on the triangular relationship between Pipa, a shopkeeper in Kikono who is forced to act as a double agent for the German and the British during the First World War, Mariamu, Pipa's wife, and Alfred Corbin, whose relationship with Mariamu remains a tormenting riddle to Pipa and the community. The narrative emphasizes the uncertain nature of Mariamu's and Corbin's relationship when Mariamu gives birth to a gray-eyed son, Ali. Like Govindji in *The Gunny Sack*, Mariamu falls victim to an unsolved murder during the

war. In contrast to Govindji, however, Mariamu becomes both a haunting presence in Pipa's life and an elusive allegory of subaltern history in Fernandes's narrative.

When the novel moves into the present and Fernandes decides to pass on the diary to Rita, his former secret love and wife of Mariamu's son Ali, Fernandes's own life story enters his narrative. If Fernandes originally believed that he began his "history [] with an objective eye on the diary of Alfred Corbin," he now realizes that the events and people of his own past and present have come into his narrative, "unasked" (233), making him both the chronicler of and actor in his own narrative. As a Christian Goan who immigrated from Bombay to Mombassa after the Second World War, Fernandes, unlike other South Asian characters of the novel, is "a complete outsider, without a common caste, religion, mother tongue, place of origin" (244). Corbin's transfer from England to East Africa and Fernandes's transfer from India to Africa indicate that colonialism was a profoundly diasporic enterprise. Migration was neither restricted to colonial bureaucrats nor to exclusive movements from the colonial metropolis to its periphery. Yet, while Corbin's transfer belongs to the well-documented history of colonial administration, Fernandes's experience of cultural displacement and migration within the colonies occupies a less prominent place in the archives of colonial history.

Like Corbin's premeditated image of Africa, Fernandes's "fantasies" of Kenya are "culled from the likes of Rider Haggard, Tarzan, and Sanders of Africa" (238). Fernandes, however, does not experience migration as a form of exile from the "mother-country," but as a movement toward "freedom: freedom from an old country with ancient ways, from the tentacles of clinging families with numerous wants and myriad conventions; freedom even from [himself] grounded in those ancient ways" (239). Furthermore, in contrast to Corbin, Fernandes does not see his new environment as an alien territory in need of surveillance and mastery. Instead, to him the encounter of cultural difference remains an encounter of surprise and astonishment that often leaves him "at a loss" (241), so that he "[n]o longer [. . .] feel[s] so sure of [him]self" (240). Other than Salim's narrative position in *The Gunny*

Sack, Fernandes's is one that develops from the experience of cultural dislocation and uncertainty that forces him to reposition himself. More precisely, Fernandes's status as an outsider blurs the conventional boundaries between cultural outside and inside positions, between a public and a private writing Self, between a narrated and narrating voice, between cultural centers and peripheries, between the reader and the writer of books. It is from this vantage point that Fernandes turns History into ethnic historiography. Put differently, Fernandes rereads colonial history as a kind of cross-cultural migration in which the binary relationship between colonizer and colonized does not suffice to explain colonialism. Like *The Gunny Sack*, *The Book of Secrets* explores the forced fusion between the private and public spheres of life, questions about cultural contamination, migration, and the legitimacy of historical origins.

While *The Book of Secrets* and *The Gunny Sack* share a number of characters, themes, and historical events, they differ in the ways in which they reconstruct and, in Vassanji's own words, "reclaim[] history" ("Interview" 133). In *The Gunny Sack*, Salim functions as the chronicler of an existing yet untold collective history. As a "myth maker and folk historian" (Vassanji, "Postcolonial" 63), the particular roles Vassanji assigns to the postcolonial writer, Salim retrieves and retells the stories locked in the oral archive of Asian African legend and history. Yet, as the chronicler and mouthpiece of his people's history, he mostly remains outside his narrative, often casting an observing and anthropological eye on his community. His detached narrative position results from the dominant role of the gunny sack as the novel's organizing metaphor. "Memory," Salim tells his readers, "is this gunny sack [. . .]. I can put it all back and shake it and churn it and sift it and start again, re-order memory [. . .]. It can last for ever, this game, the past has no end - but no, Shehrbanoo, [. . .] let it end today" (266). Here the gunny sack operates as a conventional metaphor in the sense that Richards defines the trope. Memory functions as the metaphor's tenor, while the old, dusty bag, with its mementos and objects from the past, serves as its vehicle.

Although Richards acknowledges that metaphor produces meaning through difference, he also conceptualizes the relation between tenor and vehicle in dialectical terms. In Vassanji's novel, the metaphor of the gunny sack signifies this closure by identifying memory with the various stories the old gunny sack releases. Although Salim is aware that in "this game" of metaphor, meaning endlessly reproduces itself, he is also convinced that by closing the gunny sack he can transcend history. At the end of the novel, the gunny sack metaphor undergoes a dialectical synthesis. Salim sublates both the stories and the memories of the past into his conclusion that "[t]he cycle of escape and rebirth, uprooting and regeneration" (268) must end, and that it was enough to have "dreamt the world" (269). This closure, however, can be accomplished only if we accept that the tenor and the vehicle of the gunny sack metaphor, the memory and the stories, are already in place and identical with one another rather than constructed through language and through Salim's own desire for cultural roots.

In contrast to Vassanji's first novel, *The Book of Secrets* does not offer its readers an easy access to history. To begin with, the title of the novel makes an intertextual reference to *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus of the Virtues of Herbs, Stones and Certain Beasts* (ca. 1470).[112] Although this reference may seem far-fetched, it demonstrates that Vassanji's project is to write a cultural historiography of multiple origins. Like the title of Vassanji's novel, the title of Magnus's "The Book of Secrets" serves as a generic title for eclectically compiled studies on diverse topics. In the Middle Ages these popular studies neither had a single author, a unified narrative, nor a single origin. In this regard, the title of Vassanji's novel implies that books are by definition derivative and never fully readable. Thus, the book begins with a disclaimer of the writer's authority. Furthermore, when Fernandes obtains Alfred Corbin's diary, he observes that the book "releas[ed] . . . the pungent dust" of "decay. Several pages were torn off, many were stained; there were sections which had been neatly burrowed through by silverfish. The ink was faded, the writing often unreadable" (6). If the diary as a whole refers to the former

presence of colonial power in East Africa, its battered condition also implies that the history of colonialism does not consist of a single, authoritative narrative.

From the beginning of the novel, the diary as the novel's book metaphor seems to occupy an ambiguous position. On the one hand, the literary genre of journal writing emphasizes a personal and restricted narrative point of view. On the other, the diary presents an empirical record of Corbin's observations of the customs and lives of the African people under his administration. The diary, then, functions as an instrument of surveillance and classification, as a vehicle for an imperial rhetoric that seeks to neutralize and contain not only the colonial Other, but also the immanent crises of colonial authority. Put differently, the diary symbolizes a form of colonial control which, as Fernandes remarks, "went under the name of Indirect Rule" (7). As "one forgotten fragment of an addendum to a well-documented history" (7), Corbin's diary points at the fissured and discontinuous nature of power.

With regard to my thesis here that Vassanji's book metaphor works performatively, Fernandes's initial description of the diary is significant for two reasons. First, the diary situates Fernandes's narrative in colonial history and suggests that colonialism operates as a normative but not absolute discourse of power. Second, despite the multiple stories Fernandes associates with the diary, its initial role is that of a conventional metaphor: It stands in for a fading yet powerful colonial past. But, like metaphor itself, the diary has no meaning unless it finds a reader or interpreter. Inscribed with various discourses of power, the diary invites a performative reading of the book metaphor, a reading that takes into account the many detours and displacements of the book: the book as the diary, but also the book as Vassanji's novel. In Fernandes's words, the diary tells "the story of the book itself" (7), thereby changing the oppressive historical and cultural terms that made Corbin's diary an idiom of colonial power in the first place. My performative reading of the book metaphor, then, does not depart from a binary concept of metaphor. Instead, it assumes that metaphorical meaning is discursively produced, that it examines the ways in which

metaphor produces alternative forms of cultural knowledge. Given the traditionally hegemonic role of the book trope in colonial discourse, we need to ask, what different forms of knowledge does Vassanji's book metaphor produce? What is the status of an English book in a colonial context? Situated at the interface of the written and the spoken word, Vassanji's book metaphor challenges the authority and secretive power conventionally assigned to colonial books. Vassanji's use of the metaphor suggests that colonial books need not be "properly" read to gain meaning, but that they can assume the status of a rumor the colonized interpret and pass along in various ways. In order to show the ways in which Vassanji's book metaphor can be read against postcolonial interpretations of the book as an emblem of colonial authority, I now turn to Bhabha's essay "Signs Taken For Wonders."

What is in a book?

In this essay, Bhabha examines the ways in which colonial discourse produces power through signs and symbols. The essay opens with Bhabha's account of the appearance of the English Bible in an Indian community close to Delhi in 1817. His interpretation of this event facilitates his analysis of colonial authority. As I understand Bhabha, he suggests that the discourse of colonialism, like any other symbolic system, is inherently unstable and self-deconstructive. Colonial authority, according to him, manifests itself through an ambivalent ideology of difference that posits the colonial Other as "almost the same, but not quite" (*Location* 86). For example, in *The Book of Secrets*, Corbin's diary at once reveals the administrator's desire to become an integrated part of Kikono's social community and his condescending attitude towards its individual members. As a colonial official, Corbin must construct a unified colonial society while preserving a radical cultural and moral superiority, or difference, which he must at once deny and acknowledge as the legitimization of his colonial government. Bhabha considers this double standard of colonial authority as the founding element of cultural hybridity. The response of the native,

as Bhabha sees it, is an act of colonial mimicry that exposes, mocks, and appropriates the duplicity of colonial authority. From his Lacanian perspective, Bhabha reads mimicry as an act of camouflage that subverts colonial authority from within its own reference system. The primary referent of subaltern agency remains restricted to the rules established by the colonizers.

The logic of Bhabha's argument, however, depends on a reading of the colonial book as a totalizing and transhistorical metaphor for colonial authority. Bhabha introduces his discussion of colonial authority by positing the discovery of the "English book" as the founding "moment of originality and authority." As "the emblem [. . .] of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline" (*Location* 102), the book institutes the colonizers' claim on the original and truthful representation of God's word, of history, and cultural identity. Further, Bhabha suggests that "the repetition of the emergence of the book [] represents important moments in the historical transformation [. . .] of the colonial [. . .] context" (106). The repetitions of the book Bhabha refers to are the different configurations of colonial books in the writings of Joseph Conrad and V.S. Naipaul. Each of Bhabha's examples, however, either reconfirms the book's claim to appropriate colonial representation or exposes the duplicity of colonial authority. While the recurrence of the book emphasizes the uncertain and subversive effects of colonial forms of representation, the book itself, Bhabha insists, designates "the triumph of the writ of colonialist power" (107).

As Ato Quayson argues, Bhabha's interpretation of the book suggests that the book "is somehow at one with colonial authority itself" (42). The metaphorical relation Bhabha constructs between the book and colonial authority also implies that colonial authority is cohesive. Colonial authority, then, irrespective of the specific colonial officials who exercise it, operates unaltered in different geopolitical contexts. Furthermore, Bhabha's identification between book and authority depends on the original and singular status of the

book. But it is precisely this endorsement of the colonial book's omnipresent and mysterious power that Vassanji's novel discloses in its opening:

> They call it the book of our secrets, kitabu cha siri zetu. Of its writer they said: He steals our souls and locks them away; it is a magic bottle, this book, full of captured spirits; see how he keeps his eyes skinned, this mzungu, observing everything we do; [. . .] we should steal this book [. . .]. They were only partly right, after all, those wazees — the ancients — who voiced wonder-filled suspicion and mistrust at the book and its writer. (1)

At first reading, the words of the "ancients" appear to confirm Bhabha's interpretation of the colonial book as an emblem of colonial desire, authority, and discipline. Yet, the ironical distance of the narrative voice, the to the reader defamiliarizing Swahili words, and the metaphorical orchestration of this passage imply that the response to the authority of the book is neither unanimous nor an act of mimicry. The Swahili words in this passage are of particular importance. First, they function as a translation of the expression "the book of our secrets," indicating that the book as well as the act of writing it do not manifest a historical origin. Instead, the translation of "the book of our secrets" mediates a notion of history as a non-totalizing artifice produced through language, something that gains and shifts meaning according to the reader's cultural position. Rather than exoticizing difference, the Swahili words remind the reader that different cultural experiences are never entirely translatable. Because these words are spoken by the "ancients" and, according to Fernandes, cannot be fully trusted, they also create an ironic distance between the narrator and his narrative. Thus, if Bhabha articulates the English book as a transhistorical metaphor for colonial authority, the colonized respond to this metaphor with their own sets of metaphors, questioning the applicability of general tropes to explain the logic of colonialism. The power of the book metaphor, then, depends on the ways in which it is historicized and on the eyes through which it is read.

In contrast to Bhabha's interpretation of the book, Fernandes's reconstructed history of Corbin's diary provides two examples of mimicry that enable alternative readings of the trope. The first one is contained in one of Corbin's diary entries dated March 19. Corbin writes about his servant Thomas, a Hari born Indian from Bombay, whose service

and "musical voice" (14) Corbin "gratefully"(14) accepted when he first arrived in Mombassa. Shortly after their initial encounter, Corbin's attitude towards Thomas takes a condescending turn. Reporting his journey to Kikono, Corbin writes: Thomas "has a rather irritating habit of equating his status with mine, and never tires of pointing out the shortcomings of the poor Wataita. He doesn't realize that they all have fun at his expense" (23). In another diary entry, Corbin complains that Thomas's emulation of British customs and beliefs, his "deferential" and "overprotective" (45) behavior, has become so annoying that he wants to replace him with a new servant. On the one hand, Thomas's mimicry can be read, through Bhabha, as a subversive act that "terrorizes" Corbin's authority and misconceived self-perception "with the ruse of recognition" (Bhabha, Location 115). Through mimicry, Thomas exposes the absurdity and dislocating effects of Corbin's presence in East Africa. On the other, the subversive effects of this kind of mimicry are limited, for Corbin does not read Thomas's behavior simply in terms of self-recognition. Instead, the mockery implied in colonial mimicry is directed against Thomas himself rather than against Corbin. By reinforcing the divide between different ethnic groups living under colonial rule, Thomas's mimicry also complies with colonial policies of native administration.

Other than Thomas's acts of mimicry, Fernandes's historiographical enterprise employs mimicry as a practice of citation and invention. To position himself in his own narrative, Fernandes introduces excerpts from his "personal notebook" (91). This gesture involves a double quotation. First, the "personal notebook" cites the genre of the diary. The transference of the name "diary" to that of "personal notebook" is a performative act, for it establishes a relation with Corbin's colonial diary while resignifying the constrictive purposes and effects of that diary. If the dated pages of Corbin's diary represent a linear account of history narrated within the institutional frame of colonialism, Fernandes's personal notebook is characterized by a lack of precise dates and a self-inquisitive narrative perspective. The sections of the novel that include Fernandes's notebook entries are entitled

"Miscellany," referring to the pieces and fragments that do not fit into Fernandes's puzzle of history. Fernandes may have begun his narrative by pursuing history, but in his notebooks he becomes the one haunted by history and its possible meanings. He realizes that "[h]istory drifts about in the sand, and only the fanatically dedicated see it and recreate it, however incomplete their visions and fragile their constructs" (175). In other words, to recreate, rather than to reclaim, history is to rebuild battlefields and to question the rootedness of identity in a fully knowable past, a past that takes colonialism as its primary referent. To reclaim history, Fernandes must let go of it and resist the temptation to create definite meanings: "Of course the past matters," he remarks, "that's why we need to bury it sometimes. We have to forget to be able to start again" (298).

In his musings of history Fernandes provides a link between the colonial past and the diasporic present of Asian Africans. Not only are Fernandes's notebook excerpts the only passages in the novel that make cross-cultural references to Canada, but they also employ a rhetoric of remembering and forgetting that echoes such theories of nation formation as Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community. Yet, instead of establishing national borders or arguing for nationally sanctioned amnesia, Fernandes's idea of forgetting refers to the need to disremember one's historical victimization in order to establish a viable present. To disremember, however, requires to reconceptualize history as alternative knowledge that contests the notion of nationhood as a product of Western history. In this context, we can argue that Fernandes's notebook quotes some of the pivotal Western narratives of nation formation to dislocate the concept of a cohesive nation by testing it against the experience of the globally scattered communities of Asian Africans. It is in this sense that we can read Fernandes's narrative as a part of Canadian history that has not been written within the national boundaries of Canada. Not only does the particular history of Asian Africans who emigrate to Canada emphasize historical events that need to be forgotten or commemorated different from those celebrated by the Canadian mainstream,

but the various movements and histories of migration shape and redefine Canada as a multicultural nation.

In contrast to Corbin's diary, then, the purpose of Fernandes's notebook is to make transparent the constructedness and limits of history as a system of knowledge production. Indeed, in the absence of archival history, the writing of history must become what Derek Walcott calls a necessary act of "mimicry as design" ("Caribbean" 55), a historiographical practice that proceeds through error, cunningness, and invention. "What else is a historian but a snoop?"(91), Fernandes asks. He must prey onto untold stories, weave together contradictory and heterogeneous narratives of various witnesses without merging them into one narrative or being able to predict their outcome. The only certainty that Fernandes has is that he is always subject and object of his own narrative. As he reminds us, the story of the past "is the teller's, it's[his]" (92). To tell his story, however, Fernandes is forced to recognize that the story of Corbin's diary, the story of "an embarrassing reminder" of "Empire" (93), also writes a transnational history of the present. More precisely, Fernandes dramatizes the First World War in ways that suggest that such national concepts as Canada's multiculturalism partly belong to an unacknowledged legacy of colonialism.

Fernandes begins his account of the First World War with a series of riddles that circulated amongst the people of "Kikono and other towns [. . .] caught in the midst of the mischief of the mzungus." The riddles mirror that the war was both a conundrum to the native population and a sign of colonial crises management. During the beginning stages of the Great War, Corbin is forced to relinquish his administrative power to Frank Maynard, a brutal, Kurtz-like character who works for the British intelligence service. His as well as the Germans' network of spies consists of various ethnicities that reflect the multiethnic composition of the King's African Rifles during the Great War. These troops were made up of Swahili, Somali, Arab, and Asian African men. Like Pipa, many of these men were dragged away from their families and violently pressed into German and English service. Historian V.K. Kiernan notes that in East Africa, as elsewhere, the Great War was a "war

of the races" (84). Not only were British and German war policies tailored to maximize the so-called "martial qualities" of individual African and Indian ethnic groups, but they also required a multiethnic composition of the African platoons so as to prevent mutinies. With their various political repercussions, the ethnic policies of war employed by Germans and British alike during the First World War caused large-scale migrations of Asian African communities. Fernandes's narrative, then, emphasizes the ways in which Africans and Asians were recruited for a war which, regardless of its outcome, was designed to ensure their colonial domination.[113]

As "a war of the races," however, the Great War was also fought within Canada's national boundaries. While in Europe the First World War led to the disintegration of the belief in the "grand narratives" of Enlightenment (i.e., nationhood, identity, reason), elsewhere it sparked off national movements, specifically in England's various dominions and colonies. Despite their emphasis on independence and the right to national self-government, many of the post-War independence movements built their concepts of nationhood on politics of racial exclusion as well as on ethnic and cultural separatism.[114] The First World War, as the historian Kenneth McKnaught explains, had a significant impact on Canada's constitution as an autonomous yet socially and culturally divided nation. He notes that Canada's crucial role in the war not only helped establish Canada as "a significant industrial nation" (214), but it also entrenched the cultural and political division between the English-speaking parts of Canada and Quebec. Further, Canada's war economy and highly disputed conscription policies resulted in civil discontentment and class conflicts. McKnaught writes that "[f]armers and urban workers felt the pinch of an uncontrolled inflation that increased the cost of living by two-thirds between 1914 and 1918. [. . .] [B]y the end of the war a cumulative mood of disillusionment broke out in massive labour strikes and independent farmer politics" (215). The ensuing class-conflicts, however, were accompanied, and in part pacified, by Canada's attempts at closing its borders through discriminatory and racist immigration policies.

As early as 1907 the Canadian government passed the Asiatic Exclusion Act, restricting South Asian immigration to Canada and disenfranchising people with Asian origins. In 1914 Canada's racist policies culminated in the infamous *Komagata Maru* incident. In this incident a Japanese freighter with approximately 400 East Indians was quarantined and held offshore Vancouver for two months before the vessel had to return to Calcutta. There the event caused a confrontation between the ship's passengers and the Indian police during which many of the passengers were killed. Canada's refusal to open its borders reflects a purist and separatist understanding of national identity, an understanding that resembles those colonial practices of cultural containment and separation which, according to Fernandes, characterized the colonial war policies in and around Kikono. Furthermore, the racist rhetoric of "turn[ing] back 'the turbanned tide'" (Thorpe 9) prevailed in Canada, as W.H. New remarks, in the "anti-Asian stereotypes" that "filled" the "[l]iterature in British Columbia through the 1920s" (133). Thus, the *Komagata Maru* incident symbolizes a significant moment in Canadian history in that it marks the emergence of a national imaginary split between the forgetting of racial violence and the consolidation of Canada as an autonomous nation within an imperial framework at a time of international crisis. Enshrined in the national ritual of Remembrance Day, the year 1914 conjures up Canada's human losses and political gains during the First World War while disremembering the racist policies that determined the war within and outside Canada's borders.

Fernandes's account of the global scope and ethnic policies of the Great War adumbrate a colonially inflected history of multiculturalism. He situates this history in a global and a local context, questioning some of multiculturalism's dominant assumptions. For example, by referring both to letters of his former pupil Sona who immigrated to the US and to Asian Africans who either immigrated to or are about to immigrate to London and Toronto, Fernandes traces the community's history of global migration. The notebook's fictional autobiographical entries and Fernandes's discussion of the incomplete

and heterogeneous nature of historiographical accounts suggest that his identity is shaped, in part, by his experience of migration and the cultural and political particularities of his local environment. His implicit critique of multiculturalism is evident in the self-reflexive rhetoric of the notebook but also in the series of unanswered questions that punctuate his entries in the notebook.

These unanswered questions indicate that Fernandes can neither construct a cohesive historiographical narrative nor a communal consensus that would account for the violence committed against Mariamu. Both of these aspects are important if we relate them to some of the underlying ideas of multiculturalism. David Bennett argues that one of the failures of "state-managed multiculturalism" is its address of "ethnic and racial difference as a question of 'identity' rather than of history and politics" (4). Fernandes's fragmented historiographical narrative results precisely from the refusal to presuppose a distinct Asian African identity. In fact, the "secretive trail" of the colonial diary functions as the "portal" (Vassanji, *Book* 8) towards contiguous and heterogeneous cultural identities. These identities do not emerge through the forced unity of Kikono's Asian African community but through its contradictions. For example, as a configuration of cultural difference, Pipa's, Khanoum's, and Mariamu's decentered positions in the community at large are not part of an intrinsic cultural or racial property to be exoticized. Rather, in the context of Fernandes's narrative, cultural difference becomes the name for the violent excess of a community forced to construct itself as a cohesive collective in order to gain political representation. Colonial politics of ethnic separation and contemporary policies of multiculturalism appear to be continuous insofar as both impose the demand for a collective consensus on ethnic communities regardless of the violence such a demand may effect. The construction of a collective consensus, as Bennett remarks, involves an understanding of multiculturalism as a normative act, "produced by a process of exclusion, operating variously as persuasion, silencing, domination" (5). The demand for an artificial collective consensus, then, repeats the colonial policies of ethnic separatism regardless of the variously gendered and

interracial relationships that mark the political and cultural lives of these groups. It seems to me that Fernandes's refusal to speak for Mariamu, the silenced female victim of both her own community and the colonial war, foregrounds the fallacies of culturally essentializing paradigms characteristic of some multiculturalist states.

Considering that, according to Fernandes, multiple historical experiences of colonialism and migration have shaped the transnational community of Asian Africans both in East Africa and in other parts of the world, the pressure to publicly present a distinct ethnic profile replays colonial practices of classifying people according to their presumably authentic and natural ethnic and racial identity. Fernandes's historiography reveals the artificiality of closed national borders and reinvents the traditions of national identification from within its own incomplete and fragmented narrative structure. His narrative implies that those concepts of ethnicity that emphasize cultural authenticity as their normative element must be read within their formative context of colonialism. In an interview with Chelva Kanaganayakam, Vassanji mentions that, after colonialism, the "notion of immigration is simply weird. Yet it seems to be promoted by certain sections of the host culture, especially in Canada, in their national insecurity and search for a real Canadian essence" (130). Vassanji implies that "immigration" refers to an artificial concept of national boundaries. Paradoxically, these boundaries are largely a result of colonialism and have been undermined through the diasporic movements in the aftermath of colonialism. Furthermore, trying to articulate a distinct Canadian national identity, Vassanji seems to suggest, not only serves to legitimate national boundaries but also works as a defense mechanism against the need to acknowledge Canada's racist past. If we read this statement in the context of Asian African history during and after the First World War within and outside East Africa, it is not surprising that Vassanji finds "the search for essences [. . .] deeply offensive" ("Interview" 130). Yet, to oppose cultural essentialism does not mean to promote cultural relativism and to ignore the particularities of different cultural and historical experiences.

Stealing the Book / Unbooking the Past

"Who owns the diary?" (4), Fernandes asks in the middle of his narrative. The significance of the question lies in the fact that it does not focus on the diary itself but on who owns it. At issue here is the claim on history. The question, however, is also about whether it is possible or desirable to reclaim the past wholesale. Vassanji's novel negotiates the claim on history through the role of Mariamu and her theft of Corbin's diary. Insofar as the theft of the diary endows it with new cultural meanings and challenges the notion that history is the foundation of cultural identity, its theft is a performative act. This is not to say that history does not play an important part in constructing identities. Rather, Mariamu's position as a subaltern woman who cannot be fully represented suggests that history is a narrative without closure.

Like Pipa, Mariamu is an outsider in Kikono. Her proud and independent disposition gives her an enigmatic aura. Neither Corbin nor the village people are able to cope with her difference. Instead, the village people mysticize her as a woman possessed by the spirits of the mbuyu tree, the spiritual home of dead slaves. Similarly, Corbin eroticizes her as a mysterious female "apparition" (29) "draped in white" (28) with flying black hair. Mariamu's story, however, is one of violence. The victim of ritual beatings, male abuse, and eventually of rape and murder, Mariamu does not have a voice. She is, in Spivak's words, the subaltern who cannot speak. Yet, Mariamu does speak and exercise an agency that disturbs both Corbin and Pipa. Corbin has been infatuated with Mariamu since he first saw her. At the time of his arrival in Kikono, Mariamu lives with her uncle and aunt, awaiting her marriage to Pipa, who commutes between British and German East Africa. The marriage, however, had to be delayed several times on account of both Pipa's travels and Mariamu's spiritual possession. During one of the village's rituals to exorcise Mariamu's spirits, Corbin, acting against his colonial orders, interferes with the ritual and "saves" her from her own community by handing her over to the local missionaries. In the

ensuing quarrel between Corbin and the village, Mariamu offers herself as Corbin's new cook and lives in his house until the day of her marriage to Pipa. Mariamu's elusive presence yet self-determined actions confuse Corbin. He notes in his diary: "I do not know what to make of her - the impetuous girl who walked in past my askari and spoke directly to me, then the silent girl who left chapattis for me [. . .], the proud girl holding her uncovered head high and staring directly at me [. . .]. Which is the real one?" (79). During her stay with Corbin, Mariamu also observes him writing in his diary and asks him: "What did you write today?" Corbin treats her condescendingly by answering "[t]hat you are a good girl." He does not realize that Mariamu defies his authority when, in turn, she responds to him with "[b]ut you wrote for a long time" (79). Mariamu's answer reveals that she is aware of the power Corbin wields through the book, through what he may mistakenly see as his civilizational advantage over Mariamu's illiteracy.

Similarly, Mariamu's refusal to talk about herself remains a "mystery" to Pipa, a mystery that turns into an obsession when he discovers Corbin's diary in Mariamu's belongings. In contrast to Pipa's failed attempts at stealing the diary, Mariamu has secretly taken it. "Why?," Pipa wonders. Did she take it "[t]o steal back her secret - her shame - from the Englishman? [. . .] He was convinced the book contained the answer to his torment. [. . .] Was the boy, Aku, really his own?" (172). Like Corbin, Pipa wants a definite answer, a confirmation of his patriarchal claim to uncontaminated family origins. In the hope of releasing Mariamu's spirit and of getting the answers he searches for, Pipa builds a shrine for the book. He gets a Hindu priest to sanctify the storage room of his shop and to consecrate it to the book and Mariamu's memory. The room is "forbidden" (210), except for Pipa who communicates in it with Mariamu's spirit. Associated with Corbin and Mariamu, the book is at once his obsession, his guilt, and his "absolution" (203). Its "charged presence" makes him "glow, tremble with excitement" (204). Fetishizing and eroticizing the book as his eclipsed Other, Pipa is unable to break through the binary mechanisms of a colonial psychology of Self and Other. He becomes the captive

of Corbin's book and thus of colonial history. The transfer of the book's ownership from colonizer to colonized illustrates that the power of the book does not reside in any intrinsic qualities the book may have. Instead, its power depends on the ritual status Corbin and Pipa repeatedly assign to the book as an emblem of power.

What Pipa does not recognize, however, is that Mariamu's theft of the book inserts an unrepresentable absence at the center of colonial history. To represent this absence would either perpetuate colonial victimization or appropriates the voice of the victim. Yet, by stealing the book, Mariamu also reappropriates the tools of colonial power and ultimately facilitates Fernandes's project of writing the book's history. In the course of Fernandes's narrative, the transfer of the book from Corbin to Pipa and Mariamu reconfigures the notion of history itself. Fernandes tells us that he has written "a new book of secrets. A book as incomplete as the old one was, incomplete as any book must be. A book of half lives, partial truth, conjecture, interpretation, and perhaps even some mistakes" (331). By calling his book "a new book of secrets," Fernandes cites the name the elders gave to Corbin's book. He thus acknowledges the past but does not produce a single narrative of cultural identity. Or, in performative terms, Fernandes disidentifies the colonial referent of "the book of secrets" with his own narrative and thereby reclaims history without being claimed by it. The necessary incompleteness of his "new book of secrets" or, for that matter, of Vassanji's novel makes visible the structures through which colonial history is narrativized.

Fernandes's narrative, then, uses Corbin's diary as a point of departure to illustrate the instability and fissures of colonial power and its rhetoric. The transformation of the diary into a polysemic and productive metaphor of both Fernandes's notebook and Vassanji's novel, however, depends on foregrounding the gaps that facilitate this kind of metaphorical transformation. My point is that Fernandes, in spite of refraining from appropriating Mariamu's voice, mystifies Mariamu as an allegorical figure of female subalternity. Fernandes's repeated questions about Mariamu's fate and spectral returns

signify not only the haunting presence of the past, but also the need for a teasing and eroticized secret from which to inherit the past. In his study *Specters of Marx*, Derrida's description of the ways in which one inherits the fragmented and ambiguous legacies of the past provides an analogy to Mariamu's allegorical role as a historical subaltern figure.

In this study, Derrida examines the ways in which recent philosophies of history employ the fall of the Soviet Union and socialism's often totalitarian system of government to debunk Marxism altogether. Taking *Hamlet*'s ghost as a parable for the return of history in unexpected and dangerous ways, he argues that the denial of the various legacies of Marxism leads to the temptation of declaring "the end of history" (Fukuyama) and thus of falling into political apathy. Instead, one needs to examine the legacies of Marxism as a scattered and not fully legible inheritance.

> If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause -- natural or genetic. One always inherits from a secret --which says 'read me, will you ever be able to do so?' (*Specters* 16)

Thus a secret is configured as an illegible absence that facilitates the rereading of history as a field of possibilities rather than of closures. Fernandes's narrative constructs a continuity of history implicit in his calling Corbin's diary "the book of secrets" and his notebook "the new book of secrets," all the while presenting Mariamu as the insoluble secret of the past. Remaining outside of Fernandes's narrative yet enabling it, Mariamu is the recalcitrant object of the questions he poses. Theoretically speaking, she seems to serve as the traditional vehicle for male representations of history. Metaphorically, she becomes the book, for neither Corbin nor Fernandes is able to articulate Mariamu in terms other than those of a tantalizing mystery. But what, we may ask, is Mariamu's legacy? If, as I suggest, Mariamu symbolically embodies the book itself, does she represent Corbin's diary, Fernandes's notebook, Pipa's desire for deciphering history, or perhaps a different kind of book, a book of the origins of diasporic life founded on absence and violence? To try to answer this question I draw on Derrida's essay "Edmond Jabès and the Question of

the Book" (1978) because, like Vassanji's novel, this essay formulates diasporic identities through the practice of writing.

Derrida's essay examines Edmond Jabès's observation that the Jewish people are "a race born of the book" (64), a people whose diasporic history and identity derives from the experience of exodus, migration, and the absence of geographically fixed roots. Instead, Jewish identity, as Derrida understands it, is closely related to God's written rather than spoken word and its interpretation as it is comprised in the Talmud. Writing itself becomes a metonymy for a Jewish history of constantly deferred origins. In this sense, Derrida argues, "the situation of the Jew becomes exemplary of the situation of the poet, the man of speech and of writing" (65) who can never be fully in control of the infinite meanings writing produces through its play of deference and difference. Yet, writing is not a depoliticized act that produces random meanings. On the contrary, Jabès's *Book of Questions* is "a self-justification addressed to the Jewish community which lives under heteronomy" (67). Like Fernandes's narrative of Corbin's diary, Derrida's reading of Jabès's book posits writing as the focal point for the articulation of a cultural identity that puts the concept of identity itself into question.

Derrida argues that Jabès's book traces the "generation of God himself" (66) not as the presence of an unquestionable authority, but as a rupture and silence that require continuous interpretation. By first providing his law in the form of engraved Tablets and then by breaking the Tablets, God separated himself from his spoken, "truthful" word, emphasizing the derivative nature of writing and leaving his people with "the interpretive imperative," with "the necessity of commentary" (67). The broken Tablets suggest that God's word comprises a violent and originary act that forfeits the claim to originality and absolute truth. Instead, necessarily subjected to interpretation, God's law can only be articulated as a question or commentary. Derrida insists that there are always two interpretations of God's word, the authoritative word of the rabbi and the word of the poet who interprets God's written and broken word as an open text for multiple identifications.

To the poet, religious belief or identity becomes the "duty to interrogate" while accepting that the question will not yield an absolving truth. In other words, identity becomes a form of exploration, a diasporic condition in which identity can be articulated only by questioning the concept of identity. It is in this sense that "the situation of the Jew" (65) corresponds to that of the poet or writer. In both Fernandes's narrative and Derrida's essay, however, the productive effects of articulating diasporic identity in terms of writing depend on a violent absence at the heart of meaning production, namely on Mariamu's violation and the broken Tablets of God's law respectively.

If the breaking of the Tablets symbolizes an act of violence, then this violence generates difference and absence (understood as the self-deconstructive condition of Truth embodied in God's own destruction of the Tablets). In this absence identity becomes possible as writing in the Derridean sense. In Jabès's *Book of Questions* God and his broken word constitute absence and appear "as difference" (74) that makes Jabès's book possible. In Derridean fashion, we can read this absence as a necessary rupture or caesura immanent in the differential functions of meaning production through language, a rupture that foregrounds the polysemic and discontinuous condition of history and identity. Absence, Derrida writes with view to Jabès's use of language, "knows itself as disappearing and lost, and to this extent remains inaccessible and impenetrable" (69). Derrida, as I understand him, here alludes to two interwoven notions of absence: He refers both to the abstract concept of absence as the name for the delayed and deferred production of meaning through writing and to the absence of a definite place of belonging, inscribed in Jabès's own cultural displacement in Cairo, the city and symbol of the Jewish exodus.

Through this double configuration of absence emerges a diasporic history of cultural displacement, a history configured as a narrative or interpretive act with its possibility to change the future and the experience of suffering. It is the tension, in Derrida's words, between "allegory [the necessity to interpret God's broken words] and literality [Jewish exodus, dispersal, and persecution]" that generates a diasporic history:

"Between the too warm flesh of the literal event and the cold skin of the concept runs meaning. This is how it enters into the book [. . .]. This is why the book is never finite. It always remains suffering and vigilant" (75). The writing of diasporic history, then, entails a metaphorical dimension and an ethical consideration of absence. Although Derrida's essay suggests that metaphor and allegory are to a certain extent interchangeable because both tropes refer to a self-deconstructive act of writing and reading, I prefer the term metaphor over allegory for two reasons. First, it avoids a confusion between Derrida's and Jameson's understanding of allegory. In contrast to Derrida, Jameson conceptualizes allegory as the master trope of political oppression and resistance characteristic of all postcolonial texts. Second, Derrida's essay suggests that meaning does not reside in the dual conception of the "too warm flesh of the literal event" and "the cold skin of the concept"(allegory). Instead, Derrida's own metaphorical language implies that meaning emerges from the liminal space of "writing," namely the space of metaphor in the most general sense, that lies between literality and allegory.

Derrida's essay allows us to make a productive connection between the construction of a diasporic identity and the practice of writing. At the same time, it compels its reader to reflect on the ways in which culturally different and specifically gendered configurations of absence produce different diasporic histories. In Fernandes's narrative, Mariamu appears as the necessary enigmatic absence that cannot be fully read but allows Fernandes to articulate cultural identity as a series of open-ended questions. In this context, Mariamu embodies an "original illegibility" (Derrida, "Jabès" 77) that enables the writing of the book and posits Fernandes as a writer at the threshold of cultures. Unlike the allegory of God's broken word, Mariamu does not merely represent the instability of logos. Rather, she presents the broken and unaccounted for violated female body, sacrificed on the altar of racial and cultural purity. The violence that produces the secret which organizes Fernandes's narrative is in some way a founding secret that gives rise to a "race born of the book." By citing Jabès I do not want to suggest that Mariamu has suddenly been elevated

to the status of an ephemeral and holy mother figure or that in Vassanji's novel the history of the African Asian diaspora is founded on the colonial book. On the contrary, Mariamu's story implies that, in the context of diasporic writing, the symbolic violence of writing must be read as a literal act of violence. The impossibility of representing or fully reading this violence constitutes the "interpretive imperative,"[115] the obligation to rewrite and reinterpret history, an obligation that also propels Fernandes's narrative and postpones its closure. The book, then, refers to a collectively written and open book that nevertheless acknowledges its complicity with the particular cultural history from which it emerges. Mariamu's crucial function in Fernandes's narrative is further emphasized by her role as the absent mother of Aku, the first descendent of a diasporic people, the "gray-eyed" son of two fathers, Corbin and Pipa. "To be born of the book," then, refers, on the one hand, to the absence of authentic cultural roots, of having, metaphorically speaking, too many and too few parents, and, on the other, to the process of writing identity against the grain of conventional notions of cultural and national belonging.

It is possible to argue that Fernandes transfigures the role of the victimized woman, obscuring it as a sacrifice of motherhood and female sexuality. Fernandes's self-conscious narrative, however, anticipates this reading and foregrounds the ideological fallacies involved in representing subalternity. Mariamu's metaphorical status, however, suggests an ethical writing practice, for it accounts for the limited forms of expression open to subaltern women. For example, Devi's fictional and Spivak's critical work show that subaltern women use their bodies, the site of their exploitation, as a symbolic means to express resistance. Their body language often functions metaphorically as it acts in place of the voice. Similarly, Mariamu's silence signifies her violated body and produces the gaps, the textual loci of resistance, in Corbin's, Pipa's, and Fernandes's narratives. In this sense, Mariamu's metaphorical status implies an ethical imperative because it acknowledges the "literal event" (Derrida) of violence and insists on the irreducible experience of suffering.

While Fernandes does not appropriate Mariamu's voice, he makes it the conscience of his narrative.

Furthermore, Mariamu's metaphorical configuration demythologizes certain notions of cultural hybridity. In contrast to Bhabha's understanding of hybridity as a productive form of cultural uncertainty that subverts colonial authority through mimicry, in Mariamu's and Aku's lives cultural hybridity does not lead to subaltern agency. On the contrary, symbolized by Mariamu's ostracized communal position and Aku's dual paternal origins, cultural hybridity refers to the colonial legacy of contaminated cultural origins that neither Corbin nor Aku's Asian African community fully acknowledges. In fact, to escape the moral parochialism of his community, Aku elopes with Rita to London and thus embarks on his diasporic journey. As a fugitive of history, Aku lives in cultural uncertainty. Yet, living in uncertainty does not enable him to subvert cultural norms, but it marks the ambiguous, and often painful, condition of diasporic life. Towards the end of his narrative, Fernandes discovers an exchange of letters between Corbin's wife, Anne, and Gregory, Fernandes's British colleague and friend. These letters which illustrate that Aku remains encumbered with his colonial past, return us to my earlier question, namely, what is Mariamu's legacy?

One of Anne's letters mentions an encounter between Aku and Corbin at "a colonial 'do' in London" (327), giving the reader an account of Aku's life in England. She writes that Corbin "took to him [Aku]. Where were you born? he asked, and [Aku] said, 'In a place that's not on any map. I wonder if it existed at all.' Queer, wouldn't you say? Try me, said [Corbin] [. . .] and guess what our Indian replied: 'Kikono!'" After that both men "met [. . .] one or two times in the City" (327). Fernandes reads the relationship between Corbin and Aku as a psychological web of colonial anxiety and dependency, in short, as a relationship punctuated by colonial mimicry: "What did he [Corbin] see in the younger man before him? — shades of Mariamu? And the urbanity, the polish, the acquired Englishness of the Indian — how much did they mock him, the real Englishman [. . .]. Was the

relationship between the two [Aku and Corbin], whatever its precise nature, acknowledged" (328)? Interestingly, Fernandes's comment illustrates that every act of colonial mimicry begs the question of definite cultural origins. It also emphasizes that the effect of mimicry, as I discussed it earlier, is restricted to the perception and insecurities of the colonial administrator. What remains unnoticed in Fernandes's account is both Aku's response to Corbin and the condescending language Anne uses to describe Aku in generic terms as "our Indian," indicating that Aku symbolically continues to be "the white man's [woman's] burden."

Nevertheless, Aku's response to Corbin's question about his birth place counters Corbin's anxiety of origins in significant ways. When Aku says that he was born "[i]n a place that's not on any map" or may have never "existed at all" (327), Anne and Alfred Corbin mistake Aku's words for an affirmation of the colonial practice to chart territory and cultural identity in terms of colonial periphery and center. They overlook that Aku's answer translates the notion of cultural identity from an ideology of origins into a practice of representation. By quoting Melville's *Moby Dick*, Aku emphasizes not the absence of history but the need to map such historical experiences as Mariamu's that have gone unrecognized in the *grands recits* of colonial history. Further, as a quotation from *Moby Dick*, the metaphor of the map cites both the colonial trope of exploration and Melville's monumental symbolic quest for individual and national identity from yet another geographical vantage point. While the metaphor of the map is part of a colonial vocabulary familiar to Corbin, Aku's use of the metaphor emphasizes the gaps and limits of colonial maps. More significantly, he disidentifies the tropes of colonialism, their technologies of cultural representation, with diasporic writing and history. We need to remember, however, that Aku does not speak himself: instead, represented by Anne's epistolary discourse, he is spoken for. In other words, Aku's words at once endorse and oppose the textual production of cultural identities as both a historical necessity and ambiguous colonial legacy.

Haunted by a feeling of absence and repetition, Aku's response stands as a reminder of both Mariamu's ghostly returns to Pipa's storage room and the practice of writing itself. Aku's voice is not the voice of a single individual, but a polyvocal, slightly displaced voice, a voice that quotes out of context to disrupt given power relations, one that never fully coincides with its speaker. With its reference to another book, Aku's reply suggests that one cannot escape representation. Indeed, Aku embodies the voice of a people "born of the book" (Jabès qtd. in Derrida, "Jabès" 64). Yet, the metaphorical link between Mariamu and the various books inscribed in the novel also implies that the terrifying acts of violence committed particularly against women during colonialism pose the predicament of postcolonial writing: they are its limits and its possibility. Paradoxically, it is Mariamu's metaphorical status as a secret and illegible book that gives birth to new books while defying total representation and transfiguration within Fernandes's narrative. Read as a metaphor, Mariamu marks the thresholds of postcolonial writing as sites of specifically gendered and racialized violence.

The various configurations of the book metaphor generate the self-reflexive historiographical narrative form of Vassanji's novel, thus suggesting links with other traditions of Canadian writing from a cross-cultural perspective. Similar to Vassanji's novel, novels such as Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* and Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* organize their narratives through metaphors of books. In his essay "The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction: An Erotics of Space," Kroetsch suggests that in prairie fiction the metaphor of the book illustrates the ways in which male anxiety of female sexuality leads to the male appropriation of a female narrative voice that speaks the silence of the failed male artist. To Kroetsch the metaphors of silence and the book symbolize a male and a female space respectively. By constructing and giving voice to a female narrator, the male writer "becomes the thief of words," producing "the book that conceals and denies its bookness" (75). Kroetsch aptly criticizes that the female narrative voice serves to naturalize male sexual anxiety, namely the failed artist's simultaneous desire for

and denial of sexuality, that structures the narrative of the book. What Kroetsch does not problematize is that his own critique of masculine sexuality in prairie fiction requires a dehistoricized representation of women so that they may speak in the service of and only in relation to men.

Similar to the dramatization of the book metaphor in Vassanji's novel, Kroetsch's theorization of the trope suggests that the book obscures and thereby exposes the ideological frame of the narratives in which it occurs.[116] Yet, in Vassanji's novel the circulation and writing of various books make transparent the ways in which competing structures of colonial power shape Fernandes's narrative. Put differently, the performative dramatization of the book metaphor, its citation and resignification through different characters and narrative contexts, makes visible rather than conceals the narrative practices and forms of repressive colonial historiographies. Furthermore, Fernandes's commitment to historical transparency frustrates his own desire to give voice to Mariamu. His failure to fully account for the violent effects of colonial history is made visible as a textual gap, a silence that cannot be filled with the voice of woman. At best, this silence can function, to recall Wilson Harris's term, as a caveat, as an opening towards parallel but not commensurable histories. Rather than referring to male failure, silence in Fernandes's narrative signals a specifically gendered and racialised act of physical violence.

Vassanji's and Kroetsch's dramatization of the book metaphor, then, differ from one another in such profound ways that a comparison is almost impossible. However, reading them together may enable us to examine the proximity between such conventionally separated narrative forms as Kroetsch's postmodern and Vassanji's postcolonial texts. A few years ago, Vassanji wrote that South Asian Canadian writers "suffer from the Canadian problem — sparseness, isolation. There is no movement or the sense of one, no borrowing, no cross-reference as South Asians and as Canadians" ("South Asian" 7). The metaphorical configuration of Vassanji's observation cunningly appropriates two of the major tropes--sparseness and isolation—Canadian thematic criticism employed to invent a

cohesive Canadian national identity. Here as well as in *The Book of Secrets*, Vassanji performs as a thief of metaphor. By dislocating and rehistoricizing received chains of reference, Vassanji claims and writes Canadian history from a cross-cultural perspective.

In conclusion, like *Turner*, *The Book of Secrets* illustrates the ways in which colonial forms of representation of race and sex underpin England's and Canada's processes of nation building. While Vassanji's novel explores the historical continuities between Canada's policies of multiculturalism and the colonial use of multi-ethnic platoons during the First World War in East Africa, Dabydeen's long poem examines the construction of a British national unconscious through the ambivalent aesthetic and imperial policies of J.M.W. Turner's painting *The Slave Ship*. Although these two texts differ in genre and narrative perspective, both of them employ metaphor as their organizing principle to develop their critique of Empire and nation building. In *Turner* the name "Turner" and the image of the prostitute operate as performative metaphors insofar as they cite normative imperial discourses of race and sexuality. The disidentification of J.M.W. Turner with Turner, the captain of the slave ship, the poem itself, and the stillborn child enable a reading of the contradictions of imperial power politics. A performative reading of the poem's metaphors shows the ways in which aesthetic concepts of art, the regulation of the Victorian body, the physical and representational violence of colonialism all intersect to produce a racially coded British national unconscious. As a performative metaphor, the image of the prostitute and the name "Turner" thematize both the hegemonic and destabilizing functions of metaphor in various discourses of cultural representations. *Turner* ultimately dismantles metaphor as a trope of power by putting into question the effacement of the originating figure that constitutes the ground of metaphor and the trope's dialectical operations. Rather than emphasizing metaphor's structure of depth and meaningfulness, *Turner* rearticulates metaphor as a trope of surfaces so as to arrest the cultural and aesthetic processes that transfigures blackness. Similarly, the self-reflexive

historiographical narrative of *The Book of Secrets* employs metaphor performatively by situating its organizing metaphor of the book within the normative practices of both colonial and postcolonial forms of representation of cultural difference. The discursive production of the book metaphor shows the unstable and often complicit relationship between colonizer and colonized while emphasizing that the book and its various metaphorical configurations can never be fully legible. *Turner* and *The Book of Secrets*, then, not only reclaim metaphor as a powerful trope of past and present representations of cultural difference, but their particular use of metaphor points to the ethical imperative that guards against the translation of physical violence into symbolic and textual registers of representation.

Conclusion

[R]esistance can only move towards the linguistic margin, pushing the difference inherent in metaphor as far as possible toward its disjunctive pole and yet stopping short of the complete loss of reference which would undermine political effectiveness.

Sylvia Söderlind, *Margin/Alias.* (232)

I am really very aware of not being trapped by the solution of a multiculturalism that constantly celebrates . . . the migrant and the hybrid at the expense of the differance at the origin, that therefore ignores the subaltern in other space.

Gayatri Spivak, "Neocolonialism." (229)

What is at stake in a postcolonial discussion of metaphor is the question of how to articulate agency from a position of historical and social victimization. One may very well ask why focus on metaphor if postcolonial scholars have already convincingly argued that metonymy and catachresis provide adequate tropes to explain the ambiguity of the colonial encounter and the inequity of power relations in a postcolonial world. We may also question the effectiveness of using tropes as explanatory devices for postcolonial issues, if tropes tend to generalize and reduce colonial and postcolonial experiences to general principles about colonial history (Quason 63). My study, however, does not intend to privilege one trope over the other, nor does it elevate metaphor to a universal remedy for the various political and cultural problems discourses of postcoloniality deal with. On the contrary, considering the traditionally close relationship between metonymy, catachresis, and metaphor, these questions should not and cannot be considered as either/or questions. Instead, my study is an inquiry into the particular ways in which some postcolonial writers stage metaphor as a critique of both colonial master narratives and essentialist concepts of identity and nationhood. This project, then, asks what a performative understanding of metaphor has to offer to the larger political project of postcoloniality.

The first epigraph, taken from Söderlind's "Conclusion" of *Margin/Alias*, illustrates one of the central problems such studies of metaphor as Söderlind's and my own

encounter. The critic's inevitable failure to formulate metaphor as a trope of cultural resistance. As I have stressed, the predicament of metaphor lies in the fact that there is no position outside of metaphor through which to resist metaphor. For this reason, "metaphor" and "resistance" signify a contradiction in terms. Resistance to metaphor, as Söderlind states, is restricted to the trope's "inherent" self-deconstructive operations of difference. For postcolonial writers, then, the only means of resisting metaphor is to make "the circle" of language and metaphor "as centreless as possible" (232). But even if postcolonial writers succeed in driving metaphor toward its limits of referentiality, they have to articulate the particularities of their cultural and historical experiences against metaphor's tendency to essentialize cultural difference. From this perspective, however, the postcolonial solution of metaphor has primarily normative effects; the interventive potential of metaphor is bound to the deconstructive dynamics of language itself. Yet, if we acknowledge, as we must, I believe, that we cannot resist metaphor in a postcolonial context, we have to rethink metaphor's operative modes. Indeed, from a performative perspective, as I have argued, metaphor acts as a discourse of power that has multifarious effects. Many of my readings show that, while we cannot articulate metaphor as a trope of resistance without reproducing its hegemonic functions, it is possible to resist and write through the effects of metaphor. In order to resist and resignify the totalizing effects of metaphor we must articulate what is violently erased by metaphor's operations, namely, the violence inflicted on subaltern bodies or, in Spivak's words, "the differance at the origin" inscribed in metaphor.

In an interview with Robert Young, from which the second epigraph is taken, Spivak discusses some of the terms and issues she considers to be the foci of a critical theory and praxis of future postcolonial studies. Her critique of a "benevolent multi-culturalism" that engages in "neocolonialist" practices of "knowledge-production" (226) provides a direct link to the ways in which I have read metaphor in Clarke's, Vassanji's, Lee's, Dabydeen's, and Walcott's texts. Neocolonialism, Spivak argues, is less a

geographically defined term of economic exploitation of the so-called "Third World" than a "fully fledged cultural relativism" (224) that grooms and commodifies ethnically and culturally authentic identities on a global scale. Understood as "identity talk" (234), neocolonialism produces a folkloric and homogenizing form of multiculturalism that eliminates the subaltern "differance at the origin" (229), the violently erased differences of class, gender, and race that refract the presumed authenticity and unity of ethnic groups. In the texts I have examined in my study, however, metaphor frequently serves as the trope which, by virtue of its mnemonic and destablizing functions, resists erasing and relativizing subaltern differences precisely because it does not allow for a direct access to subaltern experiences of violence and exclusion.

It is of course possible to argue that the narrators of Dabydeen's, Lee's, and Vassanji's novels represent their characters through certain metaphors in order to render familiar, and thus to control, culturally incommensurable experiences. In light of my reading of Dabydeen's *The Intended* and its narrator's tendency to re-metaphorize and appropriate Joseph's language, this argument is certainly valid. At the same time, however, the citational, recursive, and distorting effects of metaphor not only disclose the historicity of specific metaphors but also deprive the narrators of complete narrative control. In this sense, a performative reading of metaphor produces what I have called an "ethical imperative": It illustrates the ways in which such a subaltern character as Mariamu in *The Book of Secrets* produces cultural knowledge with a difference, thus frustrating the narrator's desire to both fill the gap left by her silence and to write a history of uncontaminated cultural origins.

Similarly, in *Omeros* and *Turner*, a performative reading of names and metaphors provides an account of the ways in which cultural experiences and memories have been historically staged as being natural and original. At the same time, such a reading reveals, once again, metaphor's ability to impose a unified vision of national belonging. Although both *Omeros* and *Turner* locate the production of a Caribbean or English collective national

unconscious in the imperial practices of cultural representation, their respective politics of nation narration differs radically from each other. If *Turner* rejects the possibility of transcending history, *Omeros* suggests that cultural hybridity constitutes the substance of a genuine Caribbean national identity. My reading of Helen as a totalizing signifier of the Caribbean nation, however, shows that *Omeros*'s meta-narrative of the Caribbean nation hinges on metaphorizing gender differences in order to project national unity. Reading metaphor through a performative perspective prevents us from rejoicing in a premature celebration of such concepts as "cultural hybridity." Rather than establishing a new postcolonial iconography of cultural diversity that clandestinely reproduces totalized forms of subjectivity, it politicizes the contradictions inherent in identity.

We may ask, then, why we should use "performative metaphors" to theorize the narratives of postcoloniality through yet another tropological approach. My answer to this question is simple yet unavoidably so. A performative concept of metaphor invites us to rethink the contexts as well as the very conditions and terms through which we articulate identities. If we cannot write outside of metaphor, we are obligated—whether we want it or not—to come to terms with its powerful effects in the construction of national and cultural identity. Indeed, metaphor belongs to the order of things which, in Spivak's words, one "cannot not want" and must therefore be subject to its "persistent critique" ("Neocolonialism" 234). The term "performative metaphor," then, reminds us of the trope's oppressive effects in the history of colonialism as well as in modern nation formation. An understanding of metaphorical operations in terms of reiteration and citationality exposes the political ends behind the staging of cultural identities as authentic and normative. Thus, rather than totalizing the contradictions involved in identity and nation formation, a performative reading strategy examines the absences and erasures inscribed in metaphor as the sites of physical and representational violence suffered by the subaltern body. In this way, we can reread metaphor as a trope that facilitates the writing of alternative memories without casting different experiences of colonial and racist violence in

prefabricated and fixed terms. This is, indeed, the principal reason why, at least in my mind, my study makes a useful contribution to the field of postcolonial studies.

My study, of course, leaves much room for further discussions of the ethical and mnemonic functions of metaphor in postcolonial narratives. In particular, a more comprehensive study of performative metaphors would have to include a greater variety of texts that engage in self-assertive rather than diasporic identity politics. Furthermore, we would have to explore the ways in which a performative reading of metaphor can be applied to texts that are not immediately concerned with postcolonial issues. Last but not least, we may ask to what extent performative metaphors might operate as a caveat against the pressures of an increasingly globalized world that standardizes, fetishizes, and commodifies ethnic identities. Finally, I believe it is crucial not to relinquish the question of metaphor, for it is necessary to position the constructions of cultural identities in order to facilitate historical redress and rearticulate the premises of national belonging.

Notes

[1] Biodun Jeyifo suggests to distinguish between a "post-coloniality of [. . .] normativity" (53) and a "post-coloniality of interstitiality and transnationality" (54). The former refers to writers--for example those of the négritude movement--who reassert native origins, traditions, and myths to speak "to, or for, or in the name of the post-independence nation-state" (54). The latter refers to such writers as Salman Rushdie and Derek Walcott whose works are characterized by an "ambivalent mode of self-fashioning"(53). They not only "refuse to speak on behalf of [. . .] the developing world" but they also "question the competing, polarized claims of centre and margin, metropole and periphery, Western and non-Western" (53-54). Jeyifo alerts us that writers of the first category tend to inscribe "cultural norms and traditions as comforting but enervating myths of pure origins, and as uncontaminated matrixes of the self" (53), while the writers of the second category "enjoy a far greater visibility"(54) in the Western academia often at the expense of writers of the first category. Like Jeyifo, I belief it necessary and high time to bring both of these categories into a critical dialogue. With its double effect of normalizing and subverting constructions of national identity, metaphor, as I will show in my readings, often brings to crisis the division between national and "interstitial" forms of postcolonial writing. For a discussion of the crucial impact of national post-independence writers on nation-formation and the decolonization of culture and language, see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993) 191-281.

[2] For examples of hybridity as a concept of colonial subversion, see Robert J.C. Young *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), and Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 102-122.

[3] For examples see, Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), Robert H. Macdonald *The Language of Empire. Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918* (Manchester: St. Martin's Press, 1994), as well as Elleke Boehmer's notion of the migrant as a metaphor for the postcolonial condition in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1995). See also, Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992), Peter Hulme, "Polytropic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse," *Europe and its Others*, eds. Francis Barker and Peter Hulme (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985) 17-23, David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, eds., *De-scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), and David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Mundelstrup: Dangaroo, 1985).

[4] Although Richards' work influenced literary critics and theorists of metaphor to different degrees and for different reasons, it facilitated hermeneutic, communicative, and cognitive readings of metaphor. For the former, see Ricoeur, *The Rule of* Metaphor, for the latter two, see Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1962), and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, London: Chicago UP, 1980).

[5] Gate's use of the African American trickster figure of the Signifying Monkey can be read as an example of how metaphor functions as a master trope to construct a specifically African American use of language and literary tradition. See Henry Louis Gates Jr, *The Signifying Monkey A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988). For a discussion of the ways in which the black female body has been employed to produce colonial and racist discourses of superiority, see Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *"Race," Writing, and "Difference"*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986) 223-61. For a discussion of the ways in which imperial soap advertising generates the fantasy of white cleanliness and purity through images of blackness as metaphors of pollution, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the*

[11] In speech act theory injurious speech counts as a negative performative because it does not function through the first-person present indicative active, but through the second person. The performative operation of a verbal insult resides in the immediate shaming and humiliation of the injured party. The social conventions through which injurious speech becomes effective are often silently shared racist and sexist assumptions about people who are marginalized on grounds of gender, sexuality, race, class, and/or culture. For a discussion of performativity and injurious speech, see Butler, *Excitable Speech*.

[12] A metaphor can only be a performative speech act in Austin's sense if it operates through analogy and substitution and is used in a specific context of power. If, for example, shortly before a military attack, a general commands to wipe out the enemy, then the metaphor "wipe out" functions as a promise—a performative speech act—and might even drive the will to kill people. Yet, in general, if I call somebody a fox, it does not always follow that this person will miraculously transform into a small, red-furred predator on four legs. For examples of metaphors that can be read from an Austinian perspective, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, London: Chicago UP, 1980).

[13] Derrida's notion of iteration strictly refers to the intrinsic operations of language. It designates neither sacred reiterations nor the taboo of repetitions in some oral societies. I discuss the functions of repetition in the oral traditions of Caribbean performance poetry in chapter one.

[14] Paul de Man argues that the relation between the "meaning and the performance of any text," is characterized by "a radical estrangement" (298). For example, as a persuasive act, "rhetoric is performative" in Austin's sense, yet, "considered as a system of tropes, it deconstructs its own performance" (*Allegories* 131). Thus, self-deconstructive operations of language dislocate the meaning of a text against the intentions of its author. Elsewhere de Man makes a similar argument for the deconstructive effects of metaphor in philosophical texts, which implies the possibility of a link between the operations of performance and those of metaphor. In de Man's reading of performance, however, metaphor is an example of the ways in which the locutionary force of language deconstructs the presumably authoritative status of performative and constative utterances. Rather than acting as a discourse of power, metaphor, it would appear, belongs to the locutionary plane of language.

[15] See Judith Butler, "Burning Acts -- Injurious Speech," *Performativity and Performance*, eds. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (London, New York: Routledge, 1995) 197-227. Furthermore, in her study *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler argues that the British reading of "trope" as "turn" during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appropriately describes the symbolic operations of performativity. I believe, however, that Butler's use of the generic term "trope" in part evades the more particular question of metaphor. Her argument that a trope "reflects and enacts the generativity it seeks to explain" (202) seems to be applicable to all kinds of tropes insofar as tropes generally undermine the referentiality of language.

[16] For examples of the social and transformative power of performances and their narrative orchestration, see Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, 1977) 44-45, 15-24. See also, Barbara A. Babcock, "The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative," collected in "Supplementary Essays" in Bauman, *Verbal Art* 61-80.

[17] The argument that the women's "step[ping] back to the beginning" (Morrison, *Beloved* 259) announces a turn towards a different set of cultural narratives and historical knowledges finds further support if we consider the women's emphasis on the violence of "beginnings"as an intertextual quotation of Euripides'Medea. Having discovered Jason's betrayal, she asks him "[t]o begin at the beginning,/ yes, first things first: / I saved your life" (194). With this reminder Medea insists on Jason's culpability and on a sequence of events that has ultimately made her the victim of his ambitions. The women's as well as Medea's insistence to go back to the beginning dramatizes the ethical demand to recognize the originary violence that structures victim-victimizer relationships before they are distorted and reversed in a popular and male imaginary. Both Sethe and Medea appear to be the cruel victimizers of their own children, yet, what is forgotten, are the historical events that drive Sethe's and Medea's actions. In the context of Morrison's novel, then, the notion of "beginnings" also quotes an invisible history of female victimization.

[18] The notion of dissonant sounds in the production of metaphors is borrowed from Nathaniel Mackey. He uses the notion of discrepancy to describe poetic works "of a refractory, oppositional sort" (*Discrepant* 1) produced by black and white poets from the United States and the Caribbean. The etymological meaning of "*discrepant*" refers "'to rattle, creak'" and recalls the name "the Dogon of West Africa give their weaving block [. . .]. They call it the 'creaking of the word.' It is the noise upon which the word is based, the discrepant foundation of all coherence. Discrepant engagement, rather than suppressing or seeking to silence that noise, acknowledges it" (19).

[19] Gates argument should be read as one pole of a theoretical divide among African American literary theorists and writers. In 1987 *New Literary History* published a rigorous debate between Henry Louis Gates, Houston Baker Jr., and Joyce A. Joyce, dealing with the question of whether race is a metaphor or not. Baker and Gates argue that race is a cultural construct, lacking empirical truth and functioning through a network of relations. As a metaphor race should be understood as the arbitrary attribution of cultural values to nature. Along with such critics and writers as Barbara Christian, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, Joyce counters that a consideration of race as metaphor forecloses the function of the female body as an agent and producer of historical memory. The controversy, however, suggests that the question of metaphor remains problematic as long as one maintains a division between the literal, namely the body as the natural ground of identity constructions, and the figurative, that is, the cultural assignments of meaning to nature and the body. For a discussion of this debate see, Margaret Homan, "'Racial Composition' Metaphor and the Body in the Writing of Race," *Female Subjects in Black and White. Race, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian, and Helene Moglen (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997) 77-101.

[19] For an excellent summary of the critical debates on performance theory in feminist studies and its impact on Canadian literary criticism, see Barbara Gabriel, "Performing Theory, Performing Gender: Critical Postscript," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, The Gender Issue, 54 (Winter 1994): 237-260. For a discussion of cross-dressing, drag, camp, and body performances, see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1992). For an interdisciplinary discussion of the metaphorical overdetermination of the term "performance," see Bert O. States, "Performance as Metaphor," *Theatre Journal* 48 (1996): 1-26 and Jill Dolan, "Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance, and the 'Performative'," *Theatre Journal* 45 (1993): 417-441. Dolan's essay is of interest because it introduces a binary division between the terms performance and performativity. While the latter is of specific significance within the political field, the former, she suggests, "capture[s] the academic imagination" (419). For a wide range of discussions about feminist performance art, see Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan, eds, *Acting Out. Feminist Performances* (Michigan: U of Michigan P, 1993). For a discussion of performance as a politicization of the audience, visual art, mass and popular culture, see Bruce A. Barber, ed, *Essays on [Performance] and Cultural Politicization*, spec. issue of *Open Letter* 5. 5-6 (Summer/ Fall 1983): 5-263.

[20] See, Jacques Lacan, "Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit a*,"trans. Alan Sheridan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1981) 65-119.

[21] For example, Bert O.States sees performance as a behavioral act in which means and ends are collapsed to "offer[] [. . .] the pleasure of transformation" (21). "All artistic performance", he argues, "is grounded in this pleasure and performance thereafter goes its cultural way toward endless forms of differentiation and intentionality" (25).

[22] Butler argues that performance and performativity must be distinguished insofar as in performance "what is 'performed' works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable" (*Bodies*, 234). Phelan's notion of "the unmarked," I suggest, participates in what Butler calls "gender melancholia" because it names and "act[s] out" (*Bodies*, 234) the loss of a gender identity that cannot be grieved and therefore continues to structure the psychic life of the performer. In this case, the performer still identifies with dominant discourses of gender identity. Further, to be able to act out the loss of a specific gender identity, one must be fully conscious of what this loss consists in, which assumes a fully conscious acting subject. In contrast, performativity entails "a reiteration of norms which precede,

constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's will" (*Bodies*, 234).

[23] In the context of Phelan's notion of performance, I read "act" as an event staged by a controlling subject, as a singular event that claims to be bound to "the present" (Phelan 146). Phelan's notion of an act, I think, is reminiscent of Austin's notion of performative acts as authoritative acts that do what they say. Yet, for an act to be comprehensible to an audience, it cannot be singular. Instead, as Butler and Derrida have pointed out, acts participate in a chain of acts through which they gain their force of citationality. My discussion of performativity employs the latter understanding of "acts."

[24] Brathwaite's emphasis on the African presence in Caribbean culture suggests a spiritual and historical connection with rather than the belief that cultural authenticity is retrievable. In fact, in the "Epilogue" to *Rights of Passage*, collected in *The Arrivants*, the poetic persona states that "There is no/ turning back" (85). A claim to authenticity also seems undermined by Brathwaite's own practices to fuse different West African religions. However, Brathwaite hardly devotes any space to other Caribbean ethnic groups in his Caribbean genesis of the new world. For a recent and insightful discussion about the contradictions of Brathwaite's work, see Silvio Torres-Saillant*Caribbean Poetics. Toward and Aesthetic of West Indian Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997).

[25] The attribution of emancipatory and positive value to the spoken word, on the one hand, and of derivative, hegemonic value to the written word, on the other. has been reinforced by Walter Ong's influential study *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982).

[26] Similar to Ricoeur's critique of Jakobson's schematic understanding of metaphor, I do not deny that metonymy often operates in processes of naming and renaming. Yet, if metonymy participates in naming, it does so through substitution and displacement, two operative modes metaphor and metonymy often share. What I want to emphasize, however, is a lack of critical consideration of the ways in which metaphor's hegemonic effects can facilitate a subversive use of the trope in narrative contexts that explore the hybrid constitution of cultural identity.

[27] See, specifically chapter 15 in Nathaniel Mackey, *Discrepant Engagement*. See also Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988).

[28] The notion of the ventriloquist not only reappears in recent postcolonial fiction but also punctuates Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern. The female subaltern body presents both a hegemonic and metaphorical representation of the colonial Other and a subversively signifying practice that deconstructs the colonial inscriptions of the female body. I discuss the relationship between body and metaphor in more detail in the following chapters of this study.

[29] A prominent example for writing through the "broken ground" of both language and the body is Nourbese Philip's long poem *She Tries Her Tongue Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Barbara Godard convincingly argues that Philip employs an "intensive use of metaphor" ("Hyphenated Tongue," 159) that deterritorializes or disrupts the normative referentiality of Canadian English and writes through the margins or "orifices of the body." Metaphorically, the "mouth and vagina [are] points of penetration and destabilization." To employ bodily orifices as metaphors "undermine[s] the coherence of [identity] categories"(160) based on cultural inside/outside positions. Thus, the broken ground of body and language is also a destabilizing ground that inaugurates the production of culturally hybrid meaning.

[30] In chapter four I will discuss in more detail the ways in which Spivak derives her postcolonial notion of catachresis from Derrida's concepts of the detour and the wear and tear effect of metaphor. In fact, to an extensive degree, Butler's notion of misquotation as well as Bhabha's and Spivak's discussions of catachresis are built on Derrida's understanding of catachresis.

[31] The double effacement of metaphor constitutes a text as a rhetorical trope and opens this text towards its own deconstruction. The gap between rhetoric and grammar characterizes metaphor as a self-deconstructive trope because what metaphor conveys is "the unreadability of [its] prior narration" (de Man, *Allegories* 205). Similar to Derrida, de Man's reading of metaphor locates the trope within a double movement. What Derrida sees as the first effacement of the "original figure" ("White" 8) in metaphor, de Man defines as an "original metaphor [. . .] based on a misleading assumption of identity" (*Allegories*

240). The Derridean second effacement of metaphor, the covering over of the first violent act of naming and the circulation of that name as a proper name, corresponds to de Man's observation that "the utterance of this negative insight [metaphor's construction on a false presupposition of identity] is itself a new metaphor that engenders its own semantic correlative, its own proper meaning" (240). To de Man, however, the double movement constructs texts as allegories whose rhetorical intricacy, namely the tension between rhetorical persuasion and figural instability, produces history.

[32] In the seventh chapter of his study *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, William Empson anticipates and articulates as an ambiguity what Derrida sees as the operative modes of metaphor. Like Derrida, Empson argues that the production of referentiality is discursively determined and that the meaning of words depends on the value they carry. Empson suggests that the most complex type of ambiguity "occurs when the two meanings of the word, the two values of the ambiguity, are the two opposite meanings defined by the context, so that the total effect is to show a fundamental division in the writer's mind" (192). While Empson and Derrida agree that two opposite meanings in one word constitute a total effect, Empson argues that this effect points toward two competing judgments located within the split consciousness of the writer. This suggests that the writer maintains a definite and intentional control over the writing process because, as Empson clarifies, those "two opposed judgements are being held together and allowed to reconcile themselves, to stake out different territories, to find their own level, in the mind" (218). According to Derrida, however, the totalizing effect of two opposites inscribed in one word derives from the inherently violent properties of language itself. The totalizing effect of metaphor is always destabilized by the self-destructive and heterogeneous detours and discursive circulations that mark metaphorical movement.

[33] See, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds vol. 1 (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996) 139-157.

[34] See, for example, Seyla Benhabib's essay "Feminism and Postmodernism" in *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*. Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler et al. Intro. Linda Nicholson. London, New York: Routledge, 1995. 17-34.

[35] In her essay "Performance Acts and Gender Constitution," Butler specifies that the body is neither a social construction nor a specific sex but "always an embodying *of* possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention. [. . .] [T]he body *is* a historical situation [. . .] and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and *reproducing* a historical situation" (521). In this sense, the figural substitution in metaphor presents a crucial moment at which bodies are produced as historical situations.

[36] In its metaphysical employment, metaphor is forced to operate through the logic of truth by always returning to the concept it constitutes and presupposes as being true. Paul de Man argues that such a logic "consists of positional speech acts" that effect a temporal dimension of the future within logical thinking. To de Man all forms of pre-position or pre-supposition denote a hypothesis in error that fabricates retroactively "fictitious truths. [. . .] But in so doing," de Man observes, "the temporal order has also been reversed: it now turns out that the future-projected, prospective assertion was in fact determined by earlier assumptions, that the future truth was in fact past error" so that all "*voraussetzen* [pre-positioning]" is "*Nachkonstruktion* [reconstruction]" (1979, 124). Thus, through an act of resignification metaphor can actually reconstruct past error and rewrite what was considered to be a future truth.

[37] While Paul Gilroy's study *The Black Atlantic* proposes to read postcolonial temporality within a dual fashion of a dominant Western modernity and an anti-modernity within colonial spaces, he does not acknowledge metaphor as an instrumental trope for the negotiation of colonially fragmented temporalities. Gilroy's notion of an anti-modernity is similar to yet not as complex as Bhabha's notion of "disjunctive time."

[38] In the context of Morrison's argument, I understand the term "image" to designate metaphor since there must be an analogical thought involved that links event, image and memory. Gérard Genette argues that there often occurs an "abusive use of the term *image* in our critical vocabulary to designate, not only figures by resemblance, but a whole kind of figure or semantic anomaly, whereas the word almost

inevitably connotes by its origin an effect of analogy, if not of mimesis" (118). The rhetorical figure closest to mimesis has historically been metaphor.

[39] I understand psycho-linguistic residues to be those elements of the unconscious which, as Freud discusses in his essay "The Unconscious," largely operate metaphorically and negotiate the return of the repressed in symptomatic terms. Yet, the ideas or signifieds, coded in the repressed, cannot be retraced to an unequivocal origin because they present an "ideational representation" (110) of an affect. Ideas scripted by and in the unconscious "are cathexes - ultimately of memory traces" (111). What is legible, then, are specifically cathected memory traces in the form of metaphorically configured psycho-linguistic residues

[40] For a detailed discussion of memory and narrative structures in postcolonial literature see Amritjit Singh et al., eds, *Memory, Narrative, and Identity. New Essays in Ethnic American Literatures* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1994). Karla F.C. Holloway's study *Moorings and Metaphors. Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Woman's Literature* provides a useful discussion of the ways in which African American woman's literature employs metaphors to establish narrative frameworks of "*revision, (re)membrance,* and *recursion*"(13) to produce culturally specific texts. In contrast to my study, Holloway's exploration of metaphor foregrounds metaphor's synthesizing properties. She states that her study "acknowledge[s] both a metaphorical as well as a metaphysical presence [. . .] to call attention to the generative potential within an Afrocentric theoretical perspective. My objective is to gather together figures of language, myth, and literary imagery in a creative recovery of an original cultural and gendered intimacy" (22).

[41] The spelling of "vodun" for voodoo refers to the term's Dahomeyan etymology of "vodu" and thus emphasizes the African origins of a colonially transposed religious practice. By using "vodun" rather than voodoo I follow Harris's use of the word.

[42] Since I am interested in Bhabha's notion of metaphor rather than in the practices of fetishistism, I will only briefly touch on Bhabha's discussion of the Lacanian Imaginary as the psychological origin of these practices. From a Lacanian perspective, the fetish retroactively articulates and cathects the images a subject has of itself during the mirror phase, that is, during the early stages of its psychological development. These misconceived images of the Self provide the subject with the illusion of wholeness and are therefore endowed with narcissistic libido. At the same time, the subject's alienated or misconceived self-image contains conflicting identifications so that the misconceptions of the self are marked by aggression. If the fetish consists of a substitute of these misconceived self-identifications, then the fetish is doubly marked by narcissistic and aggressive psychic energies. For a discussion of the subversive role of the fetish in the discourse of postcoloniality, see Ioan Davies, "Negotiating African Culture: Toward a Decolonization of the Fetish," *The Cultures of Globalization,* ed. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham, London: Duke UP, 1998): 125-145. See also Achille Mbembe, "The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony,"trans. Janet Roitman, *Public Culture* 4.2 (1991): 1-30, and Judith Butler's response "Mbembe's Extravagant Power," *Public Culture* 5.1 (1992): 67-74. For a discussion of the fetish that brings together postcolonial and feminist issues, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995) 181-203.

[43] Although Bhabha remarks that the operations of the fetish "will never seriously threaten the dominant power relations" ("Representation" 205), he does not examine his doubts, as Bart Moore-Gilbert critically observes, in his later "treatments of subaltern resistance, so that mimicry, for example, is consistently represented as a 'menace' to the dominant order" (*Postcolonial Theory* 135). Similar to Benita Parry's and Sara Mill's critique of Bhabha's interpretation of Fanonian psychoanalysis, Moore-Gilbert points out that "Bhabha consistently de-radicalizes his forerunner's treatment of colonial relations, by insufficient attention to the historical and material contexts in which Fanon's work always carefully situated itself" (1997, 143). See also, Sara Mills, "Discontinuity and Postcolonial Discourse," *Ariel* 26.3 (July 1995): 73-88. Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9.1-2 (1987): 27-58.

[44] De Man criticizes that Genette's understanding of metaphor as a trope of comparison and difference treats metaphor "descriptively and nondialectically without considering the possibility of logical tensions" (1979, 7) deriving from the trope's dual location in rhetorical and grammatical structures.

[45]To a certain extent, my critique coincides with Geeta Kapur's critique of Bhabha's notion of subjectivity.. Kapur argues that Bhabha constructs "discursive" rather than "insurgent"postcolonial "subjectivit[ies]" (199). "[T]here is with Bhabha," she argues, "the foregrounding of subjectivity, the extraction of it from the margins of the metropolis through a series of masquerading tactics" (199) which negate "what remains of the emancipatory imagination" (202) of postcolonial societies that have "devised [. . .] styles of historical praxis and futures" (201) beyond the tactics of colonial mimicry. However, while Kapur emphasizes the allegorical strategies of postcolonial art and film, I am concerned with deconstructing Bhabha's synthesizing notion of metaphor in order to underline the trope's emancipatory abilities and use in postcolonial writing.

[46]The notion that nations are constructed like narratives comprises one of the most empowering metaphors, or rather similes, in postcolonial discourse. As with narratives, nations cannot claim a single origin but are generated retrospectively. Both narratives and nation formations depend on their address. Their confrontational potential lies within the impossibility to constitute a symbolic entity without fissures and ruptures and the 'subtext' of various cultures, classes, and political agendas which all act as contestants in the articulation of what a nation is. As with narratives, then, nations negotiate questions of identity formation. Benedict Anderson articulates the hegemonic temporal dimension of the nation in Walter Benjamin's formulation of an "empty, homogeneous time." What interrupts this linearity are the various historical ambivalences that enter the 'nation' through global migrations. The advantage of Anderson's concept of nation formation consists in the fact that it foregrounds different imaginaries as well as processes of remembering and forgetting as central aspects of the ways in which nations construct and present themselves. From Anderson's perspective, to which my thesis is indebted, nations become a matter of cultural practice and representation. For an introduction to the topic see Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Homi Bhabha's edition of essays *Nation and Narration*.

[47]Critics such as Joseph Pivato or Anthony Appiah would strongly contradict Bhabha's reductive view of realism. Bhabha's aversion to realism, I think, mirrors how deeply his theory is embedded in the Jakobsonian notion of metaphor. It also derives from Bhabha's propensity to fully endorse texts by such writers as Toni Morrison and Derek Walcott whose works --though to different degrees--carry the legacies of modernity. Although I also discuss Walcott's and Morrison's work, I propose a critical approach to Walcott's *Omeros* in chapter seven of this study.

[48]This argument appears to engage in theoretical hairsplitting since Butler's notion of performativity, as I have discussed it in my introduction, derives from Derrida's notion of citationality. However, Butler elaborates Derrida's argument insofar as she does not restrict citiationality to the abstract dynamics of language but extends it to the ways in which authoritative speech or discourses of power legitimate themselves through reiteration and become legible as historical rather than given social formations.

[49]"Disjunctive time" refers to the asymmetrical effects of history in Western and colonial spaces. For example, the humanist ideals of liberty and equality did not cross the color bar but, as in the history of slavery, were abused to justify who did and did not count as a free human being.

[50] I refer to the effacement of the original figure in metaphor which enables the trope's various detours and folding processes. Like the supplement, metaphor works through the dynamics of referential lack and excess that generates metaphor's endless recontextualization and overdetermination of meaning.

[51]In his study *Black Like Who?*, Rinaldo Walcott discusses how the Ontario Holland Township Council made a claim to change the name of a road from Negro Creek Road to Moggie Road. While the earlier name asserts the historical presence of Black people in Canada, the latter denotes a "white settler" and was "yet another paragraph in the continuing and unfolding story of the ways in which Canadian state institutions and official narratives attempt to render blackness outside of those same narratives, and simultaneously attempt to contain blackness through discourses of Canadian benevolence" (36).

[52]My reading of Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is indebted to Robert Con Davis' and David S. Gross's insightful essay "Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and the *Ethos* of the Subaltern," *Ethos. New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*. Eds. James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin (Dallas: Southern Methodist UP, 1994) 65-89. See particularly 76-77.

[53]For a critical assessment of Spivak's reading of clitoridectomy see her own revision of her use of female metaphors in her essay "French Feminism Revisited" (*Outside In* 141-172). I believe that Spivak's self-critical view at essentializing biological metaphors concurs with her theoretical shift from strategical essentialism towards theorizing subaltern agency. For a critical yet not less essentialist reading of Spivak's metaphorical use of clitoridectomy see Julia Emberley, *Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writing, Postcolonial Critique* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1993) .

[54] In the theoretical context of this study, I understand postcolonial translations to denote first cultural translations performed within the same language which pertains to most postcolonial and ethnic texts written in English. Second, I refer to translations of texts written in those languages that were in one way or another effected by the imposition of English as the colonizer's language. I also refer to the complex practices of translation by translators who do not use their native language as a medium of translation or have several native languages at their disposal. Spivak's native language, for instance, is Bengali but she uses English as her chosen language to live, write, and work in. For a discussion of translations in postcolonial discourse see also Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Text* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992), Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions* (1995) 173-202, and Isabel Carrera Suárez, Aurora García Fernández and M.S. Suárez Lafuente, eds., *Translating Cultures* (Oviedo-Hebden Bridge, UK: Dangaroo Press, 1999).

[55] I borrow the notion of the glance from Norman Bryson who suggests that, in contrast to the gaze, "[t]he glance of the viewer is tentacular; it pulls the image into its own orbit of tacit knowledge, taking it as provocation to perform an act of interpretation which is strictly speaking an improvisation, a minutely localised reaction that cannot - impossible dream of the stereotype - be programmed in advance" (154). The glance is also reminiscent of the Lacanian screen which intervenes between the gaze and the subject as an ideologically marked picture or image. Kaja Silvermann emphasises the politically productive implications of the screen or glance when she insists on "the ideological status of the screen." Being a "culturally generated image or repertoire of images through which subjects are not only constituted, but differentiated in relation to class, race, sexuality, age, and nationality," the screen, Silvermann suggests, opens up "an arena for political contestation '(150). As a previously inscribed yet contested image or stereotype, the screen or glance participates by definition in the regulatory and productive discourses of metaphor.

[56] Like the narrator in *The Intended*, Kurtz's nameless intended in *Heart of Darkness* wants to preserve Kurtz's legacy and vision for a new world. Further, both Joseph and Kurtz are socially underprivileged. Their poverty ultimately infringes on their relationship with their respective intendeds. Both Conrad's and Dabydeen's intendeds believe that Kurtz and Joseph died the way they lived. In contrast to Conrad's mystification of Kurtz'death, Dabydeen's narrator sees Joseph's death as a result of the dismal social conditions Joseph lived in. However, if in Conrad's novella the relationship between Kurtz and his intended eroticizes imperial dreams, in Dabydeen's novel the effeminization of the narrator suggests that the erotic and often pornographic energies of Empire impose a change of gender identities on the colonized.

[57]The design of the World Cruise at the Battersea Fun Fair, the young narrator's work place during the summer holidays, displays a number of white fantasies of a mysterious and exuberant black sexuality. The narrator, for example, feels embarrassed by the representation of "[a] black woman with full breasts and gleaming thighs [. . .]. Another sat on a donkey so oddly -- her buttocks merged into its flanks -- that it seemed she was having some kind of bizarre sex with it. Someone had scrawled 'niggers out' on her body and had drawn a fat penis pointed at her mouth"(78).

[58]My discussion of Joseph's distinction between the real and the "unreal" refers less to Roland Barthes' "effect of the real" than to Rinaldo Walcott's notion of the "performative qualities of black expressive

cultures" (105). Read in the historical context of black language usage, Joseph's reiterative and ritual practices of expression engage in what Walcott calls the "politics of difference that open up new kinds of possibilities" (96). For a postcolonial debate of the normative division between appearance and reality in traditional literary criticism, see my discussion of Homi Bhabha's essay "Representation" in chapter three.

[59] As with many other intertextual references between Kurtz and Joseph, both are musicians and artists who, nevertheless, must fail not only because they are cast as mad geniuses but also because they fail to accept and rationalize the political realities which they try to overcome through their art.

[60] I would like to thank Stephen Scobie for reminding me that in Eisenstein's classical film theory montage operates metaphorically through a process of selecting and substituting images.

[61]My discussion of Joseph in the context of Black film theory does not intend to make Joseph a film theorist. His lack of knowledge and sophistication cancels out an argument of this sort. Yet, I do believe that his attempt at projecting himself in forms other than those imposed on and expected of him reflects his desire to question his own identity. While Joseph's agency is limited and inefficient in many ways, these limitations of agency may also be reinforced by reading his resistance in ways that erase what remains illegible and untranslatable in Joseph's character.

[62]Note also that David Dabydeen, as an art historian concerned primarily with the eighteenth century, frequently turns to this century as the decisive period of early modernism which installed both the English nation-state and a complex psychology of Empire through a set of interwoven discoveries and exclusions. In fact, in works such as *Turner* or *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen extrapolates and rewrites the prevailing normative effects of the eighteenth century he holds responsible for a profoundly discriminatory English national unconscious.

[63]For a discussion of onomatopoeia in the history of rhetoric see Todorov 129-146.

[64] We need to remember that Joseph cannot detect his image in the mirror but that "all" he "see[s] is shape" (101).

[65] It is interesting to note that the character of Joseph Countryman reappears, for example, in Dabydeen's later novel *The Counting House* and other texts. In each case Joseph Countryman assumes the role of a marginal yet significant figure. This may imply that, to a certain extent, Joseph figuratively dramatizes the contradictions and tensions postcolonial writers have to face more than perhaps other writers, namely to be categorized *as* postcolonial writers and to be edited and read as the speaking representatives of specific cultural groups.

[66] For the history of Chinese people in Canada ,see Paul Yee, *Saltwater City. An illustrated History of Chinese in Vancouver* (Vancouver, Toronto: U of Washington P, 1988), Ch'ing Ma, *Chinese Pioneers: Materials Concerning the Immigration of Chinese to Canada and Sino-Canadian Relations* (Vancouver, B.C.: Versatile, 1979), Brian J. Dawson, *Moon Cakes in Gold Mountain: From China to the Canadian Plains* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1991).

[67] For a detailed analysis of how motherhood can become a means of female self-empowerment in Sky Lee's novel, see Lien Chao, "Constituting Minority Canadian Women and our Sub-Cultures: Female Characters in Selected Chinese Canadian Literature," *The Other Woman. Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*, ed. Makeda Silvera (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1995) 333-354.

[68]When Fong Mei gives birth to her first daughter, she is eventually able to "launch a full-fledged mutiny (as one can only from deep within the ranks)" (134). Her mutiny emerges from within the power structures that have defined and confined her. Thus, the site of her mutiny is her female body and the strategy an act of sexual mimicry. On the one hand she seems to submit to Mui Lan's rule by enduring her husband's extramarital relationship. By apparently accepting her own defeminised and demoted status in the family, Fong Mei becomes a compliant and dutiful daughter-in-law. On the other hand, she subverts Mui Lan's authority by embarking on a love affair with Ting An. As a result she can give birth to heirs outside of Mui Lan's control. Finally, Mui Lan's intrigue, which was intended to reproduce the patriarchal order of the family, enables Fong Mei to take Mui Lan's place and have her illegitimate

children accepted as the legitimate heirs of the Wong family. At no point, however, does Fong Mei's mutiny change the patriarchal order by which she as well as Mui Lan are victimized.

[69] Both Mui Lan and Fong Mei cannot accept that "exile and homelessness," as Chow puts it,"do not mean disappearance." "'[N]ot being home' is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself" (*Writing* 30).

[70]The text does not mention whether Mui Lan or the other "old-timers" (79) speak Cantonese or Mandarin. Kae only mentions the "rustic language" of her ancestors' peasant past. It is also possible that the rhythm and structure of her translations are an invention or combination of how she imagines the dialogues between her foremothers. David Dabydeen employs a similar strategy in *The Intended*. Joseph speaks a creolised English that is neither spoken in the London West Indian community nor in Guyana. I take Lee's and Dabydeen's translations as textual markers not of a *creole* but of an *english continuum*, signifying the colonizing effects of the English language and its productive resignifications in postcolonial texts.

[71]*Omeros* dramatizes aspects of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. An examination of the ways in which all three of these epics cross-cut each other requires an independent study. For the purposes of my study, we should keep in mind that the title of Walcott's epic indicates a narrative strategy that seeks originality through mimicry. It is of course possible to argue that *Omeros* juxtaposes *The Odyssey*'s central concerns with enforced exile and homecoming with *The Iliad*'s themes of male conquest and Helen's self-chosen exile. Walcott's adaptation of Philoctete, however, reminds us that a search for *Omeros*'s presumed Homeric origins might be misleading in that it recasts Caribbean history in worn-out metaphors and reads the new in terms of the old.

[72] Kamboureli rightly criticizes Bernstein's account of the modern verse epic for merely "reiterat[ing] the traditional definitions of epic" (*Edge* 52). In the context of Walcott's *Omeros*, however, Bernstein's understanding of the epic is useful, because it demonstrates that Walcott works within rather than deviates from the classical and modern conventions of the epic. Indeed, if we wanted to classify *Omeros* generically, we have to concede that it is not a long poem as Kamboureli understands it, but rather a modern verse epic as Bernstein defines it.

[73]A further indication for this notion of the epic can be found in Walcott's Nobel Prize acceptance speech "The Antilles. Fragments of Epic Memory." Here he compares the racial and cultural fragmentation of the Caribbean and the writing of its history to reassembling a broken vase: "[T]he 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" (no page numbers). This, of course, quotes Walter Benjamin's definition of a good translation: "Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language" (78). For Walcott, the glue that holds together the narrative fragments of a dispersed history is both metonymy and metaphor, for it is metaphor that accesses memory.

[74]We should notice that the narrator seems to have less patience with Plunkett's misspelling of a noun than he has with Achille's misspelling of his canoe. Yet, at this point in the poem the narrator precisely seeks to rewrite history in ways that would make Plunkett the colonial "villain." Only at the end of *Omeros* does the narrator acknowledge Plunkett as a symbolically irreversible part of the Caribbean.

[75]Walcott's *Omeros* appears to echo Nichol's *The Martyrology* in multiple ways. Whether these correspondences are accidental or intentional is difficult to say. Yet, it seems interesting to point out that what critics often see as a specific Walcottian metaphorology already appears in Nichol's work. For example, Walcott's sea metaphors and his interest in linking the graphic properties of letters to specific meanings (e.g., the various connotations of "t" as a cross or "O" as a circle), and the notion of infinitely reversible meanings, all of these elements occur in Nichol's long poem. I believe, however, that many of the correspondences to Nichol's work can be found in those sections of *Omeros* which self-referentially

contemplate the task of the poet. I also venture the guess that both of these poets have been influenced by Dadaist poetry which may account for some of the similarities. It seems important, however, to emphasize that we can read Nichol's *The Martyrology* generically as a long poem in the way Kamboureli defines it and discusses it. Walcott's *Omeros*, on the other side, maintains closer ties with the modern verse epic for reasons I discussed earlier. Further, while Walcott's use of language may resemble Nichol's, we should not dissociate Walcott's understanding of language from the specific Caribbean history of slavery and displacement that forces the Caribbean poet, in Walcott's words, to "assemble[] nouns from necessity" (*Antilles*). A detailed comparison between both poets certainly requires another book-length study.

[76]Walcott's play *The Odyssey*, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1992, stages the Cyclops episode as a configuration of the relationship between master (Cyclops) and slave (Odysseus). In particular, Odysseus's rhetoric of negativity, non-existence, and absence echoes the terms Walcott and other Caribbean writers use to describe Caribbean history. In Walcott's *Odyssey*, Odysseus becomes the prototype of the exiled wanderer who escaped the ravages of history. Like the narrator in *Omeros*, Odysseus wants to be "[woken] up from this dream," from "history's ruin" (62). Yet, in contrast to Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of Odysseus's role as a master of Western history and values, Walcott's *Odyssey* underscores Odysseus's dominance, his art of cunning and control over the production of identity, and thus confirms Homer's *Odyssey* as a master narrative of male identity and cultural belonging.

[77]The French name of the swift is also the only name by which Achille knows the swift before he goes on his visionary and revelatory journey to Africa. See, *Omeros* 126.

[78]See the poem on House/Home, *Omeros* 173-74. The poem's change of form might signal an interruption of the epic narrative of the crossing and Caribbean survival. Yet, the formal reduction of the passage might also parallel the mental and cultural deprivations *Omeros* associates with migration.

[79]See, Diana Brydon, "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy," *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (Calgary: U of Calgary P, 1990) 191-203.

[80]Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972) provides a vivid example of how a reading of black immigrant experiences within the paradigms of thematic literary criticism fails. Her sociological reading of Clarke's short story "When He Was Free and Young And He Used To Wear Silks" overlooks that this story is profoundly experimental in its formal omission of punctuation and use of Barbadian dialect. Clarke's formal versatility does not fit Atwood's notion of experimental writing as "voicing" (245) or "naming real causes of victimisation" (241) because, more often than not, his character portraits and use of different language registers transform the notion of victimization into a discourse without closure. Moreover, Atwood does not take into consideration that Clarke's short story echoes the writing practices of Samuel Selvon and Earl Lovelace, thus following Caribbean rather than Canadian traditions of writing. If, according to Atwood, victimization counts as a historical Canadian stigma, it seems fatal to apply this stigma to readings of ethnic Canadian texts. As Clarke's texts emphasize, to accept a condition of victimization bars both the individual and the group from actively participating in the multiple narratives of Canadian nation formation. For a recent discussion of the differences between African Canadian and African American history see George Elliott Clarke, " Must All Blackness be American? Locating Canada in Borden's 'Tightrope time,' or Nationalizing Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28.3 (1996): 56-71.

[81]In her conclusion, Söderlind moves away from a categorical exclusion of catachresis from the operations of metaphor. Metaphor, she says, entails "a simultaneous naming and gesture towards unnaming, a kind of maiming" that cannot occur "outside the centre" (232). In other words, the catachrestic power of unnaming can only proceed from within the paradigms of metaphor. Here Söderlind comes close to Spivak's reading of catachresis.

[82] My reading of the ways in which the conch-shell configures Tim's melancholia as a regulatory force of identity formation processes employs Butler's rereading of Freud's analysis of melancholia. For reasons of clarity I briefly summarize Freud's reading of melancholia. In contrast to mourning, melancholia

designates the inability to detach libidinal energies from a lost object, person, ideal, or country. The melancholic person refuses to break with the attachment to what is lost and withdraws his or her attachment to the lost object "into the ego" and, according to Freud, "establish[es] an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (249). The ego, in other words, substitutes the lost object. In the process of substitution the ego splits off a critical agency (the super-ego) that regulates, structures, and judges the ego. The melancholic who identifies with the lost object punishes him- or herself for the loss of the object so that the object-loss becomes an ego-loss and the ego emerges as being ambivalently divided between "the critical activity of the ego," that is, the self-berating revocation and conservation of what is lost, and "the ego as altered by identification" (249) with the lost object. My discussion departs from Butler's suggestion that the substitutional operations and the profoundly "metaphorical language" (*Psychic Life* 178) of melancholia constitute the ego as a "history of loss, [as] the sedimentation of relations of substitutions over time" (169).

For a reading of melancholia in the context of ethnic Canadian criticism, see Smaro Kamboureli, "Of Black Angels and Melancholy Lovers: Ethnicity and Writing in Canada," *Feminism and the Politics of Difference*, eds. Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman (St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1993) 143-156.

[83] I distinguish between a concept of multiculturalism based on liberal and pluralistic values of cultural diversity and a definition of multiculturalism that not only questions the legitimacy of received power structures but also redefines our understanding of nationhood. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Bhabha, *Location* 19-39.

[84] I use the term "ethnic woman" in analogy to Chandra Talpade Mohanty's definition of the "'third-world woman'." She argues that dominant Western feminist discourses "colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world [. . .] producing/representing a composite, singular [. . .] image which appears arbitrarily constructed but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of western humanist discourse" (197). Read as an effect of normative power constellations, Tim's melancholia generates an equally singular image of Chinese women in Canada.

[85] We may also consider the success of film productions as diverse as *Amistad* and *Beloved*, two Hollywood epics of slave resistance, as examples of how a newly accepted refracted image of the West helps to reconstitute the West as an apparently genuine pluralist society. Such films may also attest to the profitable commodification of cultural difference and its acceptance in the public consciousness and mainstream culture. Does this acceptance merely reflect a historically well-known and romanticized humanist compassion for the oppressed and their struggles for independence, regardless of the contemporary inequalities of access to political and economic resources? Do these film representations of slave resistance not capitalize on and produce the pleasures of watching the sublime terrors of slavery and thus confess their complicity?

[86] For a discussion of this issue, see Spivak, "Three Women's Texts" 175-195.

[87] In Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus contemplates the complicity between the beholders of terror and the causes of terror: "Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human suffering and unites it with the secret cause" (148).

[88] I use the term modernity to emphasize that Turner's painting dates back to 1840, to the dawn of modernity around 1850. Although the painting cannot be strictly classified as a modern work of art, it is concerned with form and color experiments rather than with figural representation. Further, the *Slave Ship* expresses Turner's critique of both England's moral decay and the disintegration of imperial history. Dabydeen's rewriting of the painting suggests that the effects of imperialism and Turner's paradigmatic disenchantment with England's civilisational mission constitute seminal elements of England's march toward national and artistic modernity. Further, in my reading of Dabydeen's poem, the term also indicates that Turner's desire to resolve historical contradictions through art reflects the tendency of modern art to transcend increasingly incompatible world views through artistic form. In the context of postcolonial studies, modernity, as I have defined it earlier, refers to the inherent violence of such

ideologies as progress and enlightenment that served to "civilize" and thus to subject and construct empire's cultural Other.

[89]From November 28, 1989 to February 5, 1990 the London Hayward Gallery ran an exhibition called "The Other Story. Asian, African and Caribbean Artists in Post-War Britain." The title points at some of the critical debates the exhibition concept raised in various ethnic communities. For a detailed discussion of the exhibition, see Gilroy, "The Art of Darkness" 45-52.

[90]As the only word, the stillborn child speaks, "Nigger," I suggest, also inverts the only three words, "Massa, he dead," spoken by an African in Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*. In this way, *Turner* clarifies that it is impossible to write outside of history while simultaneously pointing at the dangers of holding on to the pains and losses of history. Here Dabydeen's poem makes an argument similar to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, namely to forget the atrocities of slavery but to remember the moment of historical forgetting.

[91] The poem may allude to the Paddy Dignam burial scene in Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this particular scene of Joyce's novel death itself connotes terror and becomes part of a grotesque discourse on human decay. In Dabydeen's poem, however, terror results from J.M.W. Turner's aesthetic elevation of the slave trade's violence through the sublime. Death does not occur naturally and cannot simply enter into a universal discourse on the *condition humaine*. Döring notes that, after all, "[t]he only license for blacks to claim a visible presence on the colonial stage was to act as comic characters, as stock types in the tradition of the minstrel show: terror transformed to comedy" (10).

[92] For Dabydeen's original source, see Ruskin, "Of Water, As Painted by Turner" 405.

[93] Jack Lindsay and Karl Kroeber point out that Turner's *Slave Ship* depicts a critique of the decaying Victorian society at the peak of imperialism and during the vast social and political changes brought about by England's industrialization. Turner himself, however, articulates his materialist and humanist critique of slavery by adding a passage of his incomplete long poem "The Fallacies of Hope" to the title of his painting:

Aloft all hands, strike the top-masts and belay;
Yon angry setting sun and fierce-edged clouds
    Declare the Typhoon's coming.
    Before it sweeps your decks, throw overboard
    The dead and dying - ne'er heed their chains.
    Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!
    Where is thy market now? (Lindsay, *Sunset Ship* 86)

For a discussion of James Thomson's, Byron's, and Coleridge's influence on Turner's poetry and painting, see chapters five and fifteen in Lindsay, *J.M.W. Turner*.

[94] In his essay "The Art of Darkness," Paul Gilroy provides a compelling reading of the ways in which Turner's *Slave Ship* operates in England's imperial discourse of nation formation. While I am indebted to Gilroy's crucial insights, I also strongly disagree with his argument that Turner's painting "can provide a small illustration [. . .] of the extent to which race has been tacitly erased from discussion [sic] of English culture" (49). I argue that it is Ruskin's glorification of the painting rather than the painting itself that has erased race from England's national narrative. In contrast to Gilroy's neglected discussion of Turner's social position as a Victorian Other, Dabydeen's *Turner* explores the space between a nationalist appropriation of Turner and the intersections between racialized and sexualized Others in the discourse of empire. The poem thereby rewrites the national memory of Turner and makes it accessible for black and a white identifications with the English nation.

[95]For a discussion of the Eyre controversy and its implications on a reaffirmed English imperial identity, see Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*.

[96]In her essay "Necrophilia or Stillbirth? David Dabydeen's *Turner* as the Embodiment of Postcolonial Creative Decolonisation," Karen McIntyre rightly suggests that "stillborn" can be read as both stillborn

and still born. McIntyre, however, does not provide a theoretical reading of the sign's doubling. Instead, she sees it as a configuration of the past through which "creativity is *still*born"(148).

[97]In an interview with Chelva Kanaganayakam, David Dabydeen talks about the metaphor of the sea in *Turner*. His argument is located within and beyond the Derridean notion of *différance* when he explains that "[a] sea is a place of erasure. I wanted that to be the place where Adam could be born. It didn't work out that way. It was a stillborn child and a dead African in the poem. The sea becomes and empty Eden [. . .]. It is also a very beautiful metaphor of the possibility of total originality. Not only erasure but absolute originality" ("Interview" 29).

[98] In her essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Spivak points out that "[n]o perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been the absolutely other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperialist self" (186). It is this process of internalizing the enuciatory split inherent in the discourse of imperialism, of becoming the "domesticated other," that shapes colonial desire in both the colonizer and the colonized. In his introduction to his poetry collection *Slave Song*, David Dabydeen articulates this desire as the "erotic energies of the colonial experience" (10). In *Turner* these energies become the focal point for an investigation into the operations of postcolonial subjection.

[99]In an interview with Maya Jaggi, Dabydeen explains that "Turner has become a symbol of genteel English identity in the same way that John Major talks about old maids bicycling off in the mist to holy communion. [. . .] Yet the intensity of [*The Slave Ship*] suggests that he must have suffered traumas and lusts and disgusts. I wanted to recover his humanity -- however perverse -- from that neck-tied establishment conservatism."

[100] I particularly refer to the following excerpt of Thomson's "Summer" in *The Seasons* (1746):

The parent sun himself
Seems o'er this world of slaves to tyrannize.
And with oppressive ray the roseate bloom
Of beauty blasting, gives the gloomy hue
And features gross - or, worse, to ruthless deeds.
[. . . . .]
Love dwells not there,
The soft regards, the tenderness of life,
The heart-shed tear, the ineffable delight
Of sweet humanity: these court the beam
Of milder climes. (90)

[101]For a discussion of the conceptual links between the English poetic imagination, imperialism, and the history of rural and urban life, see Raymond William, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973) 279-306.

[102]To conjure a Golden African age signifies a further correspondence between the African's and the Romantic longing for a pre-industrial and unspoiled English past. Both longings participate in an imperial narrative of history by constructing a continuity between antiquity and the presence. For a discussion of how the nation imagines itself at once as ancient and modern, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[103]The African, for instance, cannot remember "exactly" (2) his or his imagined sisters' ages.

[104] In Dabydeen's poem, the magician Manu explains that "time future was neither time past / Nor time present, but a rupture" (*Turner* 33). With this quotation from Eliot's "Burnt Norton," *Turner* replaces the modern sensibility of repetitive and circular time frames with the notion of discontinuous time. In the context of postcolonial concepts of time the Middle Passage marks the crucial rupture in time that makes modernity disjunctive.

[105]Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke provide the classical discussion of the sublime. While Burke suggests that every natural object that "excite[s]" terror "operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the Sublime (36), Kant argues that the sublime operates through the representation of a natural object "which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to a

presentation of ideas" (qtd. in Zizek 202). In both cases the sublime is characterized by its capacity to represent what is elusive. Slavoj Zizek reads Kant's definition of the sublime through Lacanian psychoanalysis, arguing that the object of the sublime is no longer the empirical "object, but an object which occupies the place, replaces, fills out the empty place of the Thing as the void, as the pure Nothing of absolute negativity" (206). Zizik implies that the sublime corresponds to the Lacanian Real and thereby also locates the sublime in the realm of the unrepresentable. Jean-Francois Lyotard, however, situates the sublime in the politics of visuality and language. He suggests that in sublime art "the art object no longer bends itself to models but tries to present the fact that there is an unpresentable; it no longer imitates nature, but is, in Burke, the actualization of a figure potentially there in language" (206). It is this erased yet potentially present figure postcolonial critics identify with the sublimated dead slave body in Turner's paintings. Such critics as Sara Suleri and Paul Gilroy contextualize the sublime in the history of empire and colonialism. For example, Suleri suggests that the sublime "functions as a conduit between the delusional aspect of empire-building or breaking and the very solidity of history"(37), emphasizing the fictitious quality of historical narratives.

[105] Turner's mother died in 1804, 33 years before the official beginning of Victorianism. However, I discuss Turner in the context of those discourses of sexuality and power that, according to Foucault, made and regimented Victorian society and its sites of knowledge production. Such critics as Francis Barker and Ann Stoler point out that Foucault's analysis cannot be restricted to the actual historical period of Victorianism, but that it also applies to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This time period sees the intersection of various sites of modern knowledge production: the onset of industrialization, Enclosure Acts which changed the face and order of the English countryside and its traditional life, and the construction of a bourgeois identity based on the transformation of a body in pain into a body in subjection. Turner's life time, 1775-1851, covers the crucial social, economic, and political changes within English society at the peak of imperialism and thus lends itself to a Foucaultian reading.

[106] From 1838 onwards, Turner's work was criticized for "'running riot into [. . .] frenzies'," for "'rising almost to insanity, and occasionally sinking into imbecility'," for being'"wonderful fruits of a diseased eye and reckless hand.'" Thackeray, for example, wrote "that Turners exhibits 'are not a whit more natural, or less mad'"(all qtd. in Lindsay, *J.M.W. Turner* 97).

[107] The imperial imagination, as Toni Morrison argues in *Playing in the Dark*, was rooted in the violent "sexual dynamics," in the "rawness and savagery" (44) that provided the blueprint for the white literary and visual imagination.

[108] For a discussion of the discovery and function of the specific Roman ornament *grotteska*, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1968) 24-32.

[109] For a discussion of the ways in which visual images or colonial idioms take on a secondary life through narrative, see Chow, *Primitive* 41-42.

[110] The cross-reference to *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus* is perhaps significant for another reason. As the editors Michael R. Best and Frank H. Brightman of Magnus's study point out, a medieval book of secrets allowed for a hidden critique of classical texts: "[T]he intellectual climate of the time was such that original thinkers like Albertus Magnus felt constrained to cast their writings in the form of commentaries on the works of the ancients"(xii), in Magnus's case on the works of Aristotle. Similarly, Vassanji's novel articulates its sharp critique of the devastating effects the myth of racial and cultural purity causes in both the Shamsi community in Kikono and in "Western" societies through a multitude of textual layers (i.e., Corbin's diary, the prayer book of the Shamsis, Fernandes's personal notebook, a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the collected poems and papers of Gregory, one of Fernandes's colleagues and a marginal poet. Indeed, Gregory's written legacy would provide the material for yet another "book of secrets"). The exercise, then, is not to place blame on the community but to foreground its complicity with colonial practices and values of cultural dominance. In the novel, Khanoum and Mariamu, two women of mixed cultural and racial origins, become the victims of communal violence exercised in the name of cultural conformity and purity. These acts of violence figure as the unspeakable secrets the novel

addresses and criticizes precisely by routing them through a variety of historical discourses and by refraining from solving them.

[111]The Africans and Asians who fought a European war on African ground also served as deputies of the Europeans, fighting in place of the actual war parties. In this context, we may remember Bhabha's argument that the migrants and ethnic population within a nation function as proxy for the population at large and, in this position, disturb normative forms of cultural identity formation. It seems to me, however, that the forced historical involvement of Africans and Asians in the First World War provides an ample warning that being ascribed the place of the proxy within a society governed by unequal power relations risks, in Fernandes's words, becoming "the grass" on which "two elephants fight" (149).

[112] For a discussion of the continuities between such colonial forms of government as divide and rule, statistical measurements of communities, the exploitation of traditional ethnic hostilities for reasons of homogenized political representations of intrinsically divided ethnic communities, and multicultural conceptions of nationhood, see the essays by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Susan Mathieson and David Attwell, Bery Langer, and Ihab Hassan in David Bennett, David, ed., *Multicultural States. Rethinking Difference and Identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998).

[113] Writers of the Holocaust, such as Paul Celan, have argued that the elusiveness and indeterminacy of metaphor provides a last resort for writing about the atrocities of fascism.

[114]I realize that this simplistic view of Kroetsch's use of the book trope does not do justice to the complexity of this trope in Kroetsch's work. However, I believe that it is useful to point at some possible cross-references that link ethnic Canadian texts to different traditions of Canadian writing and vice versa. A more comprehensive--future--study of performative metaphors in the context of Canadian writing would have to explain why Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* dramatizes the book trope metonymically rather than metaphorically. Taken into consideration that both Kroetsch's and Vassanji's novel are to different degrees historiographical metafictions, an answer to this question would have to take us beyond the common argument that metonymy is the paradigmatic trope of postmodern texts while metaphor belongs to realist traditions of writing frequently associated with postcolonial texts.

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