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The Global Turn

Representations of the Self in South Asian and African Anglophone Literatures in the Colonial and Postcolonial Eras

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King's College London

**THE GLOBAL TURN: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SELF IN
SOUTH ASIAN AND AFRICAN ANGLOPHONE
LITERATURES IN THE COLONIAL
AND POSTCOLONIAL ERAS**

Submitted for Degree of PhD

Inder Sidhu

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ABSTRACT

Building on interdisciplinary exchanges between postcolonial cultural theory and literary criticism, this thesis examines the idea of self in context of intercultural encounter, literary hybridity and globalization. The project locates and analyzes self in Anglophone literatures emerging from British colonies in Africa and the subcontinent through the critical lens of dialogical self theory, borrowed from the social sciences, and textual analysis of writers' creative narrative strategies.

The project examines and interrogates four pairs of texts over the colonial, postwar and post-9/11 eras in order to delineate different strategies of selfhood across four diverse fields of literature: autobiographical life writing, folk anthology, metaphysical fabulism, and contemporary realism. The eight texts under consideration, Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1794) alongside Sake Dean Mahomet's *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (1794), Henry Callaway's *Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus* (1868) and R.C. Temple's *The Legends of the Punjab* (1884-1900), Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) and G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1972), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2011) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), are organized under these generic headings and have been arranged chronologically.

Foremost a literary undertaking, the project engages the critical perspectives outlined in Jane Hiddlestone's introduction to *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form* and seeks to 'bring *littérarité* [literariness] to the fore' with a focus on 'the specific mechanics of

particular texts and genres, and on the ways in which the experience of colonialism has triggered a range of innovative forms of literary creation in response.'

The central purpose of this study responds to this renewed emphasis on the narrative strategies and creative choices involved in a literary construction of self. Threaded through this investigation is the idea of globalization, or the intensification of intercultural and dialogic complexity over time. The thesis couches its literary analysis within the framework of dialogical self theory, the imagining, expression and representation of selfhood through dialogic processes and interactions within a text.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Close Encounters — The Self, Dialogism and Literariness.

Universal language, mores and communication are basic needs. This is the message of the practical East. The basic needs will make the brotherhood of man possible. Everything else has failed.

To begin with, I may confide, I felt morally obliged to pursue this matter of writing this Critique. It was [...] a moral imperative.

G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*¹

The idea of self in postcolonial criticism connotes a range of subjectivities, voices and experiences across time and geographies. In his conclusion to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon writes,

It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.²

Fanon's discussion of how colonial categories of race disrupt black subjectivity and selfhood reach a crescendo as he agitates for new re-imaginings of self in resistance to structural oppression. In this passage, he describes self in terms of creative possibility and the (re)definition of individual subjectivity amidst discursive systems of exclusion and marginalization. Fanon's conceptualization of self and identity as sites of racial, economic

¹ G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*, (Bungay: Penguin, 1972), 298 and 314.

² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 181.

and political negotiation — subjectivities defined by others, defined against by others, potentially re-constructed and redefined by the individual — are reiterated in Edward Said's *Orientalism* and his theorization of the self-other dichotomy. Just as Fanon argues that the notion of a 'civilized' white identity is constructed against the idea of the Negro 'savage,' Said outlines how the West came to define itself against the 'contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' of the Oriental other³ in an oppositional framework of self-representation. The idea of the self is deeply enmeshed within these examples of postcolonial cultural theory, representing a range of positions from alterity and subjugation to agency and self-determination.

Contemporary literary scholarship has often looked to these postcolonial theorists in order to re-situate self as an avatar of cultural identity and to unpack the intercultural encounters that shape it.⁴ Building on these interdisciplinary exchanges, this thesis returns to the idea of self in context of literature and narrative, examining its relationships with intercultural encounter, literary hybridity and globalization. The project locates and

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2008), 2-3.

⁴ For instance: Ana M^a Manzanás, 'Self and Nation in Franklin's *Autobiography* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*,' *Selves in Dialogue: A Transethnic Approach to American Life Writing*, ed. by Begoña Simal (New York: Rodopi, 2011) 35-63, draws on Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) to develop a 'self/nation' framework illustrating how Franklin and Kingston 'inscribe themselves into 'the narration of the nation' through the wide gateway of autobiography' (35-36); Justine Baillie 'From Margin to Centre: Postcolonial Identities and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*,' *Life Writing*, 8.3 (2011), 317-329, argues 'the postcolonial life writer has the responsibility of representing a collective, communal or group identity' (320); Bojana Coulibaly '(Re)Defining the Self through Trauma in West African Postcolonial Short Fiction,' *The Critical Imagination in African Literature*, ed. by Maik Nwosu and Obiwu (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 94-109, suggests 'protagonists as represented in contemporary African short fiction illustrates a diasporic self still highly characterized by traditional experience and homeland culture' (104).

analyzes self in Anglophone literatures emerging from British colonies in Africa and the subcontinent through the critical lens of dialogical self theory, borrowed from the social sciences, and textual analysis of writers' creative narrative strategies.

Foremost a literary undertaking, the project engages the critical perspectives outlined in Jane Hiddlestone's introduction to *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form* and seeks to 'bring *littérarité* [literariness] to the fore'⁵ with a focus on 'the specific mechanics of particular texts and genres, and on the ways in which the experience of colonialism has triggered a range of innovative forms of literary creation in response.'⁶ While authors and texts are contextualized in their cultural, historical and political milieux, the central purpose of this study responds to this renewed emphasis on the narrative strategies and creative choices⁷ involved in the literary construction of self. Threaded through this investigation is the idea of globalization, or the intensification of intercultural and dialogic complexity over time. Finally, my analysis is filtered through the lens of dialogical self theory, the imagining and expression of individual self through dialogic processes and interactions within a text.

⁵ Jane Hiddlestone, Introduction to *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form*, ed. by Patrick Crowley and Jane Hiddlestone (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 1-9 (p. 1-2).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Hiddlestone additionally cites Chris Bongie in *Friends and Enemies: The Scribal Politics of Post/Colonial Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), Nicholas Harrison in *Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003) and Peter Hallward in *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002) as critics arguing for 'further attention to the literary as literary' (Hiddlestone, 4) while remaining cognizant of a text's wider political aspects and implications.

The project examines and interrogates four pairs of texts over the colonial, postwar and post-9/11 eras in order to delineate different strategies of selfhood across four diverse fields of literature: autobiographical life writing, folk anthology, metaphysical fabulism, and contemporary realism. The eight texts under consideration, Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*⁸ (1794) alongside Sake Dean Mahomet's *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*⁹ (1794), Henry Callaway's *Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus*¹⁰ (1868) and R.C. Temple's *The Legends of the Punjab*¹¹ (1884-1900), Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*¹² (1952) and G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*¹³ (1972), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*¹⁴ (2011) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*¹⁵ (2008), are organized under these generic headings and have been arranged chronologically. It is important to note that this organizing principle does not suggest that these texts directly influence one another — rather, it serves to highlight where literary strategies employed by authors occupying similar thematic territory intersect, converge or branch apart. Mahomet and Equiano, for instance, both attempt to voice different iterations of self through a single narrative register; Callaway and Temple

⁸ Originally self-published in London in 1789, subsequently revised by the author with the definitive ninth edition published in 1794.

⁹ Published by subscription in Cork.

¹⁰ Published in Natal.

¹¹ Published as *The Legends of the Panjâb* in Mumbai and London and issued in three volumes in 1884, 1885, and 1900 respectively; reprinted by the Punjab Language Department in Patiala in 1963, and academic press Atlantic Publishers & Distributors in New Delhi in 1988 as *The Legends of the Punjab*.

¹² Published in London by Faber and Faber.

¹³ First published in London by Aldor Press in 1948; re-appearing with revisions the same year in a Saturn Press edition, with additional revised editions issued in 1951, 1970, 1972, and occasionally between 1982-98. The version discussed here is the best-known Penguin Modern Classics edition.

¹⁴ Published by Random House.

¹⁵ Published by Atlantic Books in London and Simon and Schuster in New York.

both engage an 'expert position' in their editorial interventions; Tutuola and Desani articulate self and identity through the conceit of journey and movement through different global and local spaces; Adiga and Dangarembga explore the relationship between globalization and uncertainty in the processes of identity construction. I suggest that it is these collisions of cultural difference within a text's narrative, and sometimes in its formal composition, that shapes the self of its central authorial voice.

The following sections provide theoretical backgrounds and rationales for this study, discussing 1) the idea of the self and language, 2) dialogism and dialogical self theory, 3) hybridity, 4) colonialism, postcolonialism and globalization and 5) the selection of former British territories in the subcontinent and Africa. Brief synopses of the project's chapters conclude this introductory section.

Self and Language

The vast breadth of analysis and research on the self across the humanities and sciences requires we limit our critical perspectives on selfhood to the most immediately essential and pertinent scholarship. My discussion of self in this project draws on sociologist Richard Jenkins' introduction to theories of identity, *Social Identity*. Selfhood, Jenkins writes, represents 'the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives.'¹⁶ Proceeding from this premise, we can hold to the self to be the product of this unfolding, notional, collection of positive and negative

¹⁶ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 40.

definitions: what I am, what I am not. In narrative literature, the self of the authorial voice is marked by their use of first-person pronouns and enacted through encounter and interaction through the text, illuminating points of similarity and difference between the narrator and extrinsic forces. In other words, the *tabula rasa* of the narrative self is coloured in through the ‘interplay of similarity and difference.’¹⁷

In the chapter ‘Embodied Selves,’ Jenkins suggests, ‘each individual is the embodied centre of a universe of self-and-others, the locus of perpetual internal-external comings and goings, transactional inputs and outputs, some of which are incorporated into the sense of selfhood and some of which are not.’¹⁸ Unpacking this argument, Jenkins suggests that the individual represents a site of conceptual contestation, where encounters and experiences are either integrated into the self or discarded. Equiano’s representation of selfhood in *Interesting Narrative*, for instance, is built upon a framework of strategic differentiation and affinity.¹⁹ The narrator’s inconsistent use of the pronoun ‘we’ alternately identifies the speaker as African or European, reflecting two distinct sets of experiential investment —as an African and slave, as a Briton and a freedman.

Though Jenkins writes ‘most of the time we don’t seem to experience ourselves as an assembly of different bits, and particularly not as a plurality of entities’²⁰ and that ‘to have two selves transgresses one of the roots of selfhood, a degree of individual

¹⁷ Jenkins, 22.

¹⁸ Jenkins, 68-69.

¹⁹ Reflected and reiterated in the full title of his text: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African*.

²⁰ Jenkins, 66.

consistency over time,'²¹ the literary self is not necessarily bound to any such neurological imperatives. The disparate, culturally-informed, 'bits' registered in many of these texts' multivoiced or polyphonic speakers is a productive narrative strategy that engages the mechanics of intercultural encounter and dialogism. Textually, in context of narrative voice, Jenkins' notion of 'individual consistency' is destabilized by its very means of expression — language.

As David Evans notes in his introduction to *Language and Identity: Discourse in the World*, language is a 'double-edged sword' which may '[constrain] identity by erecting boundaries between 'them and us' [and liberate] identity by offering fresh opportunities to cross barriers and boundaries.'²² In this light, Equiano's shifting 'we' signals a transformative space where the 'consistency' of the unitary self is disrupted, cultural barriers crossed, and selfhood enters into contingency and transgression. An instrument of creative agency rather than a mere descriptive tool, language represents the processual features of selfhood in a text: a vehicle for interaction and experience, and a space within which similarities and differences are negotiated.

In colonial and postcolonial contexts, multilingual literary interventions add another layer of uncertainty and ambivalence to the relationship between language and self. The Simona Bertacco-edited volume *Language and Translation and Postcolonial Literatures: Multilingual Contexts, Translational Texts* responds to these tensions by agitating for a

²¹ Jenkins, 66-67.

²² David Evans, *Language and Identity: Discourse in the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4.

renewed focus on translation studies as a site for postcolonial critical inquiry.²³ Of particular interest is Bill Ashcroft's contribution, 'Bridging the Silence: Inner Translation and the Metonymic Gap.' Referring to postcolonial writers' resistance to the trappings of Received Standard English, Ashcroft argues, 'rather than being absorbed into the great swamp of English, writers employed techniques of inner translation and transformation to produce an English that was culturally located, culturally specific, and clear in its identification of difference.'²⁴ Tutuola's adaptation of West African folklore in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, for example, attempts to marry Yoruba expression to English grammar and vocabulary, working local vernacular and syntactic structures into formal literary English, revising both. This intuitive, internalized translation demonstrates how boundaries between languages may be productively engaged in order to construct new modes of expression and representation.

Dialogism and Dialogical Self Theory

The narrative dialogism examined in this project is derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia — conflicting, differentiated, voices mixing within a single register. Bakhtin's 1934 essay 'Discourse in the Novel' argues that

language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-

²³ Simona Bertacco, 'Introduction: The Fact of Translation in Postcolonial Literature,' *Language and Translation and Postcolonial Literatures: Multilingual Contexts, Translational Texts*, ed. by Simona Bertacco (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-13.

²⁴ Bill Ashcroft, 'Bridging the Silence: Inner Translation and the Metonymic Gap,' *Language and Translation and Postcolonial Literatures: Multilingual Contexts, Translational Texts*, ed. by Simona Bertacco, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17-32 (p. 20).

ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth [...] These 'languages' of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying 'languages.'²⁵

Language, according to Bakhtin, is indelibly marked by complex discursive interplay, 'suffused with the views, opinions and conceptual horizons of those who make up the various social, professional and generational groupings.'²⁶ Informed by economic, social, political and historical forces, language takes 'meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, [it] cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness.'²⁷ The relationship between heteroglossia and these 'living dialogic threads' marks for Bakhtin 'a point at which language actively remakes itself and evolves in the process of its living use.'²⁸ In Bakhtian dialogism, language constantly accrues meaning through ceaseless interaction with other voices and means of expression.

Psychologist Hubert Hermans's work on dialogical self theory²⁹ builds on these ideas of heteroglossia and dialogism to articulate a rubric for examining dialogical

²⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 291.

²⁶ Alastair Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 98-99.

²⁷ Bakhtin, 276.

²⁸ Renfrew, 111.

²⁹ *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*, ed. by Hubert Hermans and Thorsten Gieser (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2012).
Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society, ed. by Hubert Hermans and Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

relationships within the individual self. A complex multidisciplinary theory of self, this broad overview of DST lays the framework for further critical elaboration in the following chapters.

In Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society, Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue that self may be composed of many different selves in constant dialogic interaction. The experience of globalization, they argue, introduces ‘spatial and temporal changes in society’³⁰ that affect the way the self perceives and processes information and perspectives from the outside world. Spatial and temporal compression achieved through technology (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the global circulation of literature, for instance; in the twentieth century through the telephone, television and satellites; in the twenty-first century through the Internet) bring a range of different cultural positions and priorities into a local context and closer proximity with self. Hermans conceptualizes these diverse positions as ‘generalized others,’³¹ an abstract way of describing the different cultural voices encountered as a result of globalization. Interaction between self and ‘generalized others’ may result in the internalization of these different cultural positions, where many different voices speak as one —

The focus here is on intercultural processes that lead to the formation of a multiplicity of cultural positions or voices coming together in the self of a single individual [...] the processes of globalization and localization are not just realities

³⁰ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 4.

³¹ Hermans and Gieser, ‘Introductory Chapter: History, Main Tenets and Core Concepts of Dialogical Self Theory,’ 5.

outside the individual but are rather incorporated as a constituent of a dialogical self in action.³²

The constituent elements of the dialogical self, these different cultural voices, are themselves subject to negotiation through the ‘experience of uncertainty.’³³ Uncertainty refers here to the conditions of traversing through unknown cultural, economic and political spheres — the challenges of ‘adapting not only to [a] local culture but also to [a] global society.’³⁴ If the dialogical self engages uncertainty, its constituent elements may be reconfigured or reshaped through exposure to different cultural experiences and perspectives, ‘initial positions [may be] influenced or changed [...] by the encounter itself.’³⁵ Though this framework is reminiscent of the notion of ‘inner speech,’ Hermans insists the dialogical self must be differentiated from private rumination. He outlines three key features that set the dialogical self apart from self-reflection —

(i) it is explicitly multivoiced rather than mono-voiced and is engaged in interchanges between voices from different social or cultural origins; (ii) voices are not only ‘private’ but also ‘collective’ and as such they talk through the mouth of the individual speaker; (iii) the dialogical self is not based on any dualism between the self and other: the other (individual or group) is not

³² Hermans and Gieser, 5.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 27.

³⁵ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 3-4.

outside the self but conceptually included in the self; the other is an intrinsic part of a self that is extended to its social environment³⁶

Unpacking these concepts, DST refers to the potential of the self as a dialogic object in terms of Bakhtin's conceptualization of language. Just as Bakhtin 'utterances,' 'individualized embodiment[s] of speech acts,'³⁷ recursively generate and accrue meaning, so too does the dialogical self submit to, and reflect, constant changes to his or her cultural, social, economic and political conditions. As with heteroglossia and language, dialogical selves engage inwardly with competing cultural voices, but articulate these voices in a single register. Similarly, just as Bakhtin holds that 'languages do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways'³⁸, the dialogical self reconfigures itself as it encounters 'generalized others' and different cultural systems.

DST provides an invaluable critical framework to this project, bringing together its key thematic lynchpins: language, narrative, intercultural encounter, hybridity and globalization. The criteria supplied by Hermans here, and expanded upon in the chapters' close readings and textual analyses, allows for closer engagement with the authors' aesthetic and creative approaches.

An analysis of literary self framed by DST proves useful in examining the mechanics of intercultural encounter within a text and in tracing how its different cultural voices interact and intersect. Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* for instance, describes its author as 'African'

³⁶ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 7.

³⁷ Bakhtin, 272.

³⁸ Bakhtin, 291.

while strategically adopting the narrative inflection of a British imperialist, Christian, gentleman and slave. Historical records suggesting Equiano was not born in Africa, as he claims, but in South Carolina further complicate the role of self in his text.³⁹ Applying the critical frameworks of the DST in context of life writing illuminates how the relationship between *Interesting Narrative's* narrating- and narrated-'I' facilitates strategic movement between cultural spheres and how Equiano (re)constructs or invents self positions through language and metonymy. In such collections and anthologies as Callaway's *Nursery Tales* and Temple's *Legends*, which lack a conventional narrator, DST reveals how the texts' editorial voices and interventions serve as proxies for self, allowing their authors to assume authoritative expert positions mediating intercultural systems of meaning and knowledge. In contemporary realist novels like Dangarembga's *Book of Not*, where issues of (de)colonization serve as a thematic background to plot and exposition, DST provides a critical structure in the examination of uncertainty, globalization and self.

The dialogical self is a versatile and constructive tool in literary inquiry, particularly in postcolonial criticism and related fields — despite the conceptual overlap between DST and interdisciplinary literary research, however, there has not yet been any significant scholarship exploring its utility in this field.

Hybridity

³⁹ Vincent Carretta, *Equiano: The Biography of a Self-Made Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), xvi.

An influential and highly contested expression in academia, 'hybridity' has come to represent a constellation of meanings across disciplines as varied as biology, anthropology, geography and sociology. Though essentially suggesting mixing or the products of combination, it is difficult to consider hybridity meaningfully in a general sense. As Marwan Kraidy notes in his preface to *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*, 'rather than a single idea or unitary concept, hybridity is an association of ideas, concepts and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other [...] it is therefore imperative to situate every analysis of hybridity in a specific context where the conditions that shape hybridities are addressed.'⁴⁰ Limiting the term's critical bounds to literary analysis, for instance, invites a number of important questions: what elements or attributes are being combined? Are they racial, cultural, linguistic, textual, or some combination thereof? Are they marked by east-west, European-Oriental cleavages? Does one dominate the others? Does this suggest a material compatibility or incompatibility? Does the final product represent a new, homogenous result, or heterogeneous mixture? In order to respond to these issues and arrive at a tenable definition of literary hybridity within colonial, postcolonial and global contexts, it is first necessary to address the critical currents that have shaped it.

With regards to postcolonial scholarship, the term's elasticity has admitted a variety of competing claims within its remit — Robert Young's *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* delineates an important initial critical trajectory. Young proposes that the colonial notion of 'culture' is rooted in the idea of racial difference and participates in a

⁴⁰ Marwan Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), vi-vii.

‘conflictual economy acting out the tension between sameness and difference, comparison and differentiation, unity and diversity, cohesion and dispersion, containment and subversion’⁴¹. The colonial conception of hybridity, he suggests, refers to the transgressive expression of this tension: the movement between essential racial and cultural categories through miscegenation and interracial coupling. Young wonders whether contemporary postcolonial criticism inadvertently repeats this nineteenth century argument, noting that the word ‘may be used in different ways, given different inflections and apparently discrete references, but it always reiterates and reinforces the dynamics of the same conflictual economy whose tensions and divisions it re-enacts.’⁴²

Beyond its colonial-era use as a pejorative signalling racial impurity or intermingling, contemporary attempts to reclaim the word as shorthand for diversity and productive intercultural encounters have alternately been characterized as a progressive ‘subversion of political and cultural domination’ or a retrograde cosmopolitan discourse ‘that celebrates the experience of privileged intellectuals.’⁴³ Anjali Prabhu outlines the three major strands of hybrid debate in her introduction to *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* — 1) the position popularized by Homi Bhabha, where hybridity represents ‘the triumph of the postcolonial or the subaltern over the hegemonic [where] the resistant always appropriates the cultural onslaught and modifies its products or processes for its own purposes;’⁴⁴ 2) the materialist critique espoused by Aijaz Ahmad

⁴¹ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 50.

⁴² Young, 27.

⁴³ Kraidy, 2.

⁴⁴ Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 12.

and Benita Parry, where hybridity ‘applies more to metropolitan elite emigrés and far less to migrant diasporas and even less to those who have “stayed behind’ in the (ex)colony;’⁴⁵ and 3) the antihybridity counterclaim, holding ‘hybridity, when carefully considered in its material reality, will reveal itself to actually be a history of slavery, colonialism, and rape, inherited in terms of race [...] it is a difficult and painful history of interracial identity.’⁴⁶

Anna Winterbottom adopts a more conciliatory approach, noting ‘the concept of hybridity has been useful in moving the global history of ideas forward from an earlier language that relied on the concepts of centre and periphery.’⁴⁷ Taking a different view, Anjali Gera Roy notes that cultural hybridity pre-dates its subsumption into postcolonial criticism,

Post-colonial celebrations of hybridity [...] are conveniently amnesiac to pre-colonial hybrid zones that produced India’s composite, dynamic cultures. Indian history records more moments of cultural contact rather than those of insulation. Pre-colonial contact zones, though fewer compared to post-colonial, testify to the fruitful fertilization of Indian cultures through cross-cultural exchanges [...] Compelling evidence of selective hybridization through which Indian cultures have constantly reinvented themselves refutes the idea of a pure, autochthonous essence, which is often invoked to oppose contemporary global cultural influences.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Anna Winterbottom, *Hybrid Knowledge in the Early East India Company World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

⁴⁸ Anjali Gera Roy, ‘Bhangra Remixes’ in *India in Africa, Africa in India*, ed. by John C. Hawley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 95-116 (p. 96).

While Winterbottom suggests that hybridity is a liberating conceit because it advances critical theory beyond cultural binarism, Roy argues that its application within postcolonial frameworks is often limited and fails to acknowledge cultural histories pre-dating colonial intervention. On one hand, hybridity dismantles Eurocentric discourses; on the other, it perpetuates and reinforces them.

In order to disentangle the term from this dense critical thicket, I adopt a selective approach that borrows from Paul Sharrad's conception of a 'strategic hybridity' that

answers the needs of its different users according to their socio-political contexts [...] This surely is the fundamental project of hybridity theory: to undermine the foundations of fundamental separatisms — be they racial, religious, linguistic or to do with sexual identity — and to open up equal spaces of mixing that neither assimilate everything into one global melting pot, nor deny the right of special recognition to indigenous peoples.⁴⁹

Expanding on this notion, literary hybridity signals the specific textual product of intercultural exchange, where the marriage of disparate cultural material may be appreciated in shades between heterogeneity and homogeneity, resistance and absorption, confrontation and conciliation. Sharrad concludes his essay by remarking that the idea of hybridity answering the specific needs of diverse peoples and circumstances may encourage 'essentialism according to the needs of the situation'⁵⁰ — which might present a

⁴⁹ Paul Sharrad, 'Strategic hybridity: some pacific takes on postcolonial theory' in *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition*, ed. by Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 99-120 (p. 106).

⁵⁰ Sharrad, 118.

theoretical stumbling block were this project's central focus on an inherited continuity between authors and texts. Though each text emerges from a distinct locale and socio-political context, the vital connective tissues are provided by intertwining narrative strategies guiding their constructions of self and a shared history of British colonial rule. In application, 'strategic hybridity' proves essential in parsing the relationship between creative practice, the focus of this project's analysis, and a text's broader historical contexts. Hybridity refers here to the various literary processes and strategies that frame cultural encounters in a text, both as reflections of artistic design and broader discursive interventions.

The following excerpts from *Legends, Hatterr* and *White Tiger* on the subject of a lover's modesty are particularly instructive instances of how these processes and strategies shape intercultural and interlingual encounters and inform the structure of self. Temple's rather bloodless translation arises from his narrative projection of self as cultural scientist,

Seeing his beauty she began to weep.

Crying out and weeping she became very wretched.

She became very wretched weeping violently.⁵¹

while the culturally in-between Hatterr satirizes the same conceit through a flurry of dialogue, 'I played this game of supplicating, kid-behaviour coquetry: and, 'Sir, you have insulted me!' nice Nellie virgo-intacta stuff: further entreating, more demure maiden nonchalance, 'No, no, a thousand times no, Sir Galahad!' the sister Celeste stuff.'⁵² Adiga's

⁵¹ R.C. Temple, *Legends of the Punjab vol. II* (London: Trübner & Co. 1884-1890) 66.

⁵² Desani, 73.

class and caste-focussed *The White Tiger* further deconstructs this trope in a leering passage on prostitutes, speaking to the narrator's familiarity with the sex trade:

Up in one building, sitting on a windowsill in such a way that we could see the full spread of their gleaming dark legs, were the 'Americans': girls in short skirts and high platform shoes, carrying pink handbags with names in English written on them in sequins. They were slim and athletic — for men who like the Western kind. In this corner, sitting in the threshold of an open house, the 'traditionals' — fat, chunky types in saris, for those who like value for their money.⁵³

Each author's reinvention of this conceit is facilitated by the interaction between distinct narrative voices within their texts. Temple's Victorian conservatism parses Punjabi vernacular through a basic poetic register designed to satisfy Oriental scholars, separating the Romanized original above his translations with a hard line; Desani's frantic subversion of formal literary composition and dialogue joins familiar literary antecedents with low babu English, obliquely referencing Galileo's daughter, Sister Maria Celeste, further incorporating a Latin medical phrase as if to deliberately muddle the issue; Adiga's garish account of a brothel encounter examines ideas of identity and voice through sarcastic association, with his tonally Hinglish narrator referring to dark-skinned Indian sex-workers as 'Americans' because their handbags bear English script. Where *Legends of the Punjab* engages these intercultural voices through editorial intervention, *Hatterr* combines its multivoiced sensibility into a sustained heterogeneous narration, and *White Tiger* synthesizes these elements into Hindi-English polyphony. These basic interlingual

⁵³ Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 58.

encounters also raise thematic issues specific to each author's historical context — Temple and the anthropological organization of local folkloric tradition; Desani and his critique of postcolonial identity, mixing and *métissage*; Adiga and his interest in the fluidity of class, caste and wealth in the global era.

Colonialism, Postcolonialism and Globalization

Colonial discourse refers to the structures and values underpinning British colonial rule and governance, most notably its centre-periphery and subject-object models. These concepts describe the hierarchical and oppositional relationships characterizing British colonialism in such regions as South Asia and Africa. For example, the binarism of the enlightened Briton-uncivilized Other, the cultural and economic British centre and the exploited, remote colonial periphery, the active British subject and acted-upon colonial object. Postcolonial discourse signals a critique of both coloniality, the myriad conditions and effects of colonial rule, and its effects upon colonial or formerly colonial territories and subjects. Revisionist postcolonial criticism problematizes the hierarchies and binary oppositions built into colonial discourse by redrawing the parameters of its representation — animating the voices, perspectives and histories of the Other and Othered. As I will illustrate, new networks of cultural and linguistic relationships further complicate these binaries and cleavages in an era of globalization and entrenched global systems.

The idea of globalization serves as an important critical backdrop to my investigation of literary hybridity over the three time periods under consideration. Like hybridity, globalization connotes a range of complex and contested claims across

disciplines, requiring clarification and definition in context of this project's analysis.

Anthropologist Jonathan Friedman's account of global systems in his essay 'Globalizing Languages: Ideologies and Realities of the Contemporary Global System' provides a concise critical framework:

Globalization is best understood as a phase of decentralization of accumulation, one that is accompanied by enormous dislocations and migrations, by class polarization and cultural fragmentation, and by the rise of new powerful regions.

Periods of declining hegemony are [...] periods in which struggles for separation, autonomy and recognition lead in concert and in various degrees to the fragmentation of the formerly hierarchic order [...] Globalization is the manifestation of this process of decentralization and consists in a massive transfer of accumulation from old to potentially new centres.⁵⁴

He reinforces this account with a position put forth by historian Fernand Braudel in *The Perspective of the World*, 'Braudel argues that globalization is what has occurred and still occurs in periods of declining hegemony in which old centres transfer massive amounts of wealth or capital to new rising centres.'⁵⁵ Centres and peripheries, he argues, operate on a 'dynamic continuum'⁵⁶ characterized by large-scale upheavals of expansion and contraction. While globalization has historically operated in parallel to the European colonial project, often driving its expansionist ethic and impulse toward homogeneity, it

⁵⁴ Jonathan Friedman, 'Globalizing Languages: Ideologies and Realities of the Contemporary Global System,' *American Anthropologist*, 105 (2003), 744-752 (p. 744-46).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

has also contributed to the decline of centre-periphery models and a gradual diminishment of Western cultural, economic and political dominance.

Friedman identifies four zones, or aspects, of hegemonic decline that enact a process of 'horizontal' polarization, a phenomenon that occurs at local levels as communities fragment along cultural, economic and class-based fault lines — diasporization, indigenization, regionalization and nationalization: respectively, the 'ethnicization of migration,' a 'practice of rooted identification that can generate new collectivities [...] new identities,' the 'reidentification of subnational areas as culturally unified groups' and 'the ethnification of nation-state identity in which citizenship is increasingly paralleled or even superseded by a cultural identity.'⁵⁷

The possibilities of indigenization and new collectivities are especially pertinent to this project: Friedman's description of polarization speaks to the breaking apart and social fragmentation of hegemonic centres of power, stressing that this disjunctive process may in turn produce opportunities for the development of new cultural identities. My research turns to this notion in order to chart where cultural consolidation and fracture are represented in the texts and how literary hybridity generationally connects and reconfigures these threads.

Friedman's remarks on nationalization, where the primacy of cultural identity undermines the significance of citizenship, are also important. The links between self, identity and stratification along cultural lines are prominent themes in a number of texts

⁵⁷ Friedman, 746-47.

and revisit the core postcolonial anxieties of home and belonging. Even as the centre-periphery model erodes under increasing post-national pressures, Friedman writes, there is renewed local-level social disconnection that feeds into cultural estrangement and disaffection. This critical perspective informs my inquiries into the relationship between culture and identity and how 'strategies of selfhood'⁵⁸ may be organized. Taking the position that globalization connotes a basic destabilization of the colonial centre-periphery, I suggest that new contact zones between cultures and languages arising from the diminishment of binarism offer opportunities for enunciation, where 'new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols, are tried out, to be discarded or accepted.'⁵⁹

Kraidy outlines several points of symmetry between globalization and the idea of hybridity, writing, 'hybridity as a characteristic of culture is compatible with globalization because it helps globalization rule [...] hybridity entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture [...] as a discourse of intercultural relations, hybridity conjures up an active exchange that leads to the mutual transformation of both sides.'⁶⁰ This project proposes to examine the selected works in order to identify how hybridities, intercultural and interlingual textual encounters, are altered and reimagined in view of this global cultural framework, mapping out where diverse cultural strands intersect, converge or diverge in the texts. The thesis builds on these theoretical touchstones in order to articulate a new

⁵⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1.

⁵⁹ Victor Turner, 'Variations on a Theme of Liminality' in *Secular Ritual*, ed. by Sally Falk Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1977) 46-65 (p. 40).

⁶⁰ Kraidy, 148.

approach to apprehending the literary self, and examining how it operates amidst these global cultural flows.

Situating the Texts

The selection of former British colonies in Africa and the subcontinent as the principal sites of this project's inquiry is guided by the fact that their encounters with colonialism diverge significantly from histories of colony elsewhere in the world. In contrast to settlement-based expand-and-displace imperial policies enacted in Canada, the United States and Oceania, South Asian and African colonial experience is characterized by the co-existence of majority indigenous populations with extraneous European arrivants. While Canada's Numbered Treaties compelled an already-decimated First Nations population into surrendering their lands to settlers, and similarly intentioned 'protection' acts in Australia encouraged and endorsed aboriginal segregation, African and South Asian populations were spared such large-scale legislated displacement under colonial rule.

Although this rationale appears equally applicable to the colonial Caribbean, the West Indies represents a unique case. As Patrick Colm Hogan writes in his introduction to *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean*, Caribbean nations are examples of 'alienated majority' colonies where 'colonized people are in a numerical majority, but [have] been alienated from their land through forced displacement, and alienated from their ancestral traditions, languages,

and so forth through forced dispersal and intermixing.’⁶¹ The threefold dilution of native Caribbean languages and traditions upon European intrusion and the arrival of African slaves and indentured Indian workers places the West Indies in a separate and distinct colonial context. The comparatively broad survival of indigenous South Asian and African customs, languages and traditions even as their territories were absorbed into the British Empire, meanwhile, filters into the intercultural literary encounters staged by South Asian and African writers, as well as their British counterparts.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter Two opens my analysis with an examination of cultural memory and intercultural encounters in Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* and Sake Dean Mahomet’s *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*. Framed as epistolary autobiographies, Equiano and Mahomet’s texts remain curiously ambivalent in terms of self and self-representation, employing uncertain pronouns to alternately align themselves with colonial occupiers or their home communities. These subtle switches are often couched in long passages of cultural description —rather than critical cultural engagement. Compositionally, telling rather than showing, as in the following excerpts:

The Seapoys are composed of Mahometans and Hindoos, who make no other distinction in their exterior appearance, than that the Hindoos colour each side of

⁶¹ Patrick Colm Hogan, *Colonialism and Cultural Identity: Crises of Tradition in the Anglophone Literatures of India, Africa, and the Caribbean* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), 2-3.

the face and forehead with a kind of red paint, produced from the timber of the sandal tree. The dress of both, is a thin muslin shirt, a red coat in uniform, a turban, sash, and short trousers [...] The turban, which is of muslin, is mostly blue as well as the sash: it is quite small, fitted very closely to the head, and not unlike a Scotch bonnet in form, except that the front is more flat, to which they affix a cockade of white muslin puffed and trimmed with silver lace, with a star in the middle.⁶²

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets [...] Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and as the subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere.⁶³

As suggested by these extracts, narrative and authorial self-positioning within Equiano and Mahomet's texts remains unsettled. This chapter's textual analysis is informed by my reading of the 'third position' in DST, where the self may potentially unify a diverse range of cultural voices within it 'without denying or removing their differences (unity-in-multiplicity).'⁶⁴ A close examination of Equiano and Mahomet's narrative strategies reveals how *Interesting Narrative* and *Travels* elide cultural borders in the context of self, but remain textually committed to these boundaries nevertheless.

⁶² Sake Dean Mahomet, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, ed. by Michael Fisher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 74.

⁶³ Olaudah Equiano, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African Written by Himself' in *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 2003) 34.

⁶⁴ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 10.

Chapter Three discusses Henry Callaway's *Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus* and R.C. Temple's *The Legends of the Punjab* and investigates how both writers insinuate the authorial self into their collections of folklore through linguistic intervention. Held as local experts among their British peers, Callaway and Temple are deeply invested in the production of colonial knowledge — the formation of 'universalizing discourses, the world-constituting cosmologies, ontologies and epistemologies produced [...] by those persons and institutions who claim to speak with authority.'⁶⁵ Their work, however, reflects divergent attitudes towards the role and duty of folklorist and translator — contrast Temple's account of his commitment to basic, unadorned, prosody to Callaway's respect for idiom:

I have found by experience that the surest way to solve a knotty point is to trust to strict philology and a literal translation of the words, never however neglecting the bard's traditional rendering if there be one, for after all he may be right. Now it is clear that the above procedure involves a very tedious process and would inevitably take up much time, would fully occupy indeed such leisure as a busy Indian official like myself can never hope to have.⁶⁶

The translation, without being absolutely literal, will be found to be a true representation of the original [...] my object has been to give idiom for idiom rather

⁶⁵ Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), 36.

⁶⁶ Temple, vol. I, xi.

than word for word, and at the same time to preserve, as far as possible, the characteristic peculiarities of the original.⁶⁷

These stylistic and aesthetic interventions belie the presence of a self or central authorial figure curating and mediating between source material and reader. This chapter's readings examine how Callaway and Temple's aesthetic choices engender multivoicedness in context of DST's account of positioning theory, where 'opposites are embedded in historical and cultural circumstances so that the dominant position paints the opposite one with its own colour [...] and, as a result, is prevented from contributing to a dialogue from its original point of view.'⁶⁸

Chapter Four discusses how G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* build on conceptions of difference in order to demonstrate how self may be communicated and constructed from beyond bounded cultural spaces. Building on Sarah Upstone's idea of 'chaotic space,' fluidity and journey, I examine how the texts situate language and difference within this chaos in order to initiate intercultural encounters:

The departed one recommended a face to face encounter (the A and the Z of it):

Application of Brute Force, the maximum blow [...] He meant to proceed against the cardinal that night, the Zulu War (1877-1878) technique and no half measures!

⁶⁷ Henry Callaway, *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus* (London: Trübner and Co., 1868), ii.

⁶⁸ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 186.

Meanwhile...

All objects by the Ganges are asleep.⁶⁹

Their town was surrounded by a thick and tall wall. If any early person mistakenly entered their town, they would catch him or her and begin to cut the flesh of his or her body into pieces while still alive, sometimes they would stab a person's eyes with a pointed knife and leave it there until that person would die of much pain.⁷⁰

As these extracts illustrate, *Hatterr* and *Drinkard* reimagine the traditional linguistic sensibilities of the English novel as something both beyond and between languages and cultures. In this chapter, I discuss how Desani and Tutuola negotiate divergent modes of self-representation through the disparate cultural signifiers at work in their novels. Close readings in this section are framed by DST's discussion of 'the coexistence of the global and the local,'⁷¹ and a tension between the competing forces of 'homogenization and heterogenization.'⁷²

Chapter Five proposes that Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* question issues relating to identity, agency and class in the global age. I argue that both authors complicate received cultural histories in order to critique racial and class-based disenfranchisement in their respective countries, with Adiga skewering aspirants to India's emergent middle-class and Dangarembga addressing the Rhodesian discourses enabling violence and racial inequality:

⁶⁹ Desani, 129.

⁷⁰ Tutuola, 59.

⁷¹ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 24.

⁷² Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 23-24.

See, this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. A clean, well kept, orderly zoo. Everyone in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here. Cowherds here. Landlords there [...] And then, thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947 — the day the British left — the cages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law.⁷³

She was reading a book she had not bothered to share with me, which rather than being revolutionary seemed to be about agriculture for it was called *A Grain of Wheat*, written as far as I could see by someone like poor Bongo in the Congo, a starving Kenyan author.⁷⁴

This chapter's textual analysis links DST's account of four 'aspects of uncertainty'⁷⁵ arising from globalization — complexity, ambiguity, deficit knowledge and unpredictability — to *White Tiger* and *Book of Not*'s anxieties in regards to the postmodern reconstitution of self and identity. As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka argue, uncertainty is 'not necessarily a negative experience [...] the experience of uncertainty may open and broaden the space for possible actions [and may] be seen as a definitive farewell to the dogmas and ideologies of institutions that restricted and confined the self in earlier times.'⁷⁶

Chapter Five, the project's concluding chapter, recounts the centrality of creative, stylistic and aesthetic practice in the construction of the literary selves discussed in this

⁷³ Adiga, 35-36.

⁷⁴ Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not* (London: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Ltd, 2006), 117.

⁷⁵ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 27.

⁷⁶ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 28.

study's selected texts. Finally, I evaluate the critical utility of DST at the intersection of literary hybridity and self, and explore potential new directions and applications for this framework in both postcolonial literary criticism and cultural studies.

Chapter 2: Negotiating Difference — Positioning the Self in Sake Dean

Mahomet's *The Travels of Dean Mahomet, a Native of Patna in Bengal, Through Several Parts of India, While in the Service of the Honourable the East India Company* (1794) and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789)

I offer here the history of neither a saint, a hero, nor a tyrant. I believe there are few events in my life, which have not happened to many [...] If then the following narrative does not appear sufficiently interesting to engage general attention, let my motive be some excuse for its publication. I am not so foolishly vain as to expect from it either immortality or literary reputation.⁷⁷

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*

Allow me to request, Sir, your indulgence for any inaccuracies of style, or other imperfections, that may arrest your judgment in glancing over this Work, as previous my situation in life, and want of the literary attainments, that refine and polish the European, preclude me from embellishing it, with that elegance of expression, and those fine touches of the imagination, which always animate the performance of cultivated genius.⁷⁸

Sake Dean Mahomet, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*

Narrative self in Dean Mahomet's *Travels of Dean Mahomet* and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African* is

⁷⁷ Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. by Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 31-32.

⁷⁸ Dean Mahomet, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, ed. by Michael Fisher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 32.

uncertain and shifting. Drawing on the generic conventions of autobiography and the contemporary travel writing of their time, Mahomet and Equiano relate the traditions, customs, rituals and histories of their homelands to their eighteenth-century Anglophone audiences. Both authors, however, distort, alter or misrepresent key details in their accounts of their lives — *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative* instead portray imagined selves based on a template of lived experience. This chapter examines the formal, stylistic and aesthetic strategies engaged by Mahomet and Equiano in their construction of this ambivalent voice, a dialogical self constituted of a multiplicity of positions contained within the 'I,' and discusses its role in the production of colonial knowledge.

Critical Perspectives and Frameworks

Self, Autobiography and Life Writing

Though Western autobiographical writing may be traced back to antiquity, pre-dating even St. Augustine's *Confessions*,⁷⁹ it only begins to emerge as a distinct literary genre in Europe over Mahomet and Equiano's lifetimes, during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The word 'autobiography' itself, James Olney observes, 'was fabricated toward the end of the towards the end of the eighteenth century [...] to describe a literature

⁷⁹ For instance, Emily Gowers has suggested autobiography is threaded through Horace's *Satires*; Emily Gowers, 'Fragments of Autobiography in Horace Satires I,' *Classical Antiquity*, 22.1 (2003), 55-91. Catherine Steel identifies in Cicero an 'autobiographical impulse from the beginning [...] disseminated into a career context;' Catherine Steel, 'Cicero's Autobiography: Narratives of Success in the Pre-Consular Orations,' *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz*, 23 (2013), 251-266 (p. 254).

already existing under other names ('memoirs' and 'confessions,' for example).'⁸⁰ Mahomet and Equiano's own versions of 'self-life-writing'⁸¹ are similarly dressed as 'travels' and 'narrative,' intersecting with such tropes as travel narrative, memoir and slave narrative while promising readers intimate accounts of interest drawn from their authors' lives.⁸² The relationship between autobiographical writing, the composition of a self narrative relating lived experiences, and the idea of autobiography as a genre, the organization of these narratives within a critical order and structure, is one worth clarifying in context of postcolonial criticism.

Postcolonial interventions in autobiographical theory have forwarded 'life writing' as an alternative to the generic descriptor 'autobiography,' which critics contend has historically privileged white male voices over those emerging from other cultural or social spaces. As Linda Anderson argues, autobiographical criticism as delineated by such critics as Olney and Philippe Lejeune in the mid-to-late twentieth century tended towards the universalization of individual subjectivity within a patriarchal Western cultural framework.

⁸⁰ James Olney, 'Autobiography and the Cultural Moment' in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 3-27 (p. 6).

⁸¹ Olney, *Autobiography and the Cultural Moment*, 6.

⁸² The popularity of these proto-autobiographical signifiers is evident in the titles of such contemporary texts as Abu Taleb Khan's *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe, during the years 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803* (1810), translated by Charles Stewart, a professor at East India Company College in Hailey, Hertfordshire, and Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert 'Ukawsaw Gronniosaw,' an African Prince* (1772), transcribed by a young woman in Leominster, Herefordshire, which map similar thematic territory to Mahomet and Equiano's writing.

Referring to Lejeune's 'autobiographical pact,' an author's promise to the reader affirming a commitment to narrative authenticity,⁸³ Anderson writes,

Have we necessarily believed all subjects in the same way? Have all signatures had the same legal status?

Insofar as autobiography has been seen as promoting a view of the subject as universal, it has also underpinned the centrality of masculine — and, we may add, Western and middle-class — modes of subjectivity.⁸⁴

She problematizes Lejeune's formulation by suggesting that women writers, for instance, might not necessarily be extended the same trust afforded to male authors, given prevailing cultural attitudes and contexts. In not accounting for minority or marginalized voices in their frameworks, Anderson argues, these critics instead prioritize 'ideals of autonomy, self-realization, authenticity and transcendence which [reflect] their own cultural values.'⁸⁵ A failure to adequately differentiate between the realization of self, an individual's 'isolated uniqueness,'⁸⁶ and the representation of self in autobiographical writing⁸⁷ reinforces these universalized subjectivities, extrapolating from 'a unified, unique selfhood' an 'expression of a universal human nature.'⁸⁸ These attitudes encourage totalizing discourses that

⁸³ Lejeune theorizes that autobiographical authors enter into a contract with readers, affirming that an autobiographical text's author, narrator and protagonist refer to the same person. Philippe Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Pact' in *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin, trans. by Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), .

⁸⁴ Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.

⁸⁵ Anderson , 4.

⁸⁶ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). Cited in Anderson, *Autobiography*, 4.

⁸⁷ Anderson. 4.

⁸⁸ Anderson, 5.

‘transcend,’ or effectively erase, social, cultural and economic differences⁸⁹ in favour of generating universal truths on selfhood and identity. Postcolonial skepticism towards the universalizing tendency of autobiographical criticism re-maps its expectations of subjectivity; postcolonial critics, David Huddart writes, ‘emphasize how one universalization of subjectivity has always excluded other modes of subjectivity [and show] how at best other subjectivities are admitted to consideration in order to bolster sameness.’⁹⁰

Drawing on Anderson’s observations, Huddart writes, ‘we cannot restrict ourselves to a narrowly ethnocentric and paternalist model of life writing, and if that is what autobiography tends to designate, then we might do better using other terms to describe the most general tendencies.’⁹¹ The more inclusive framing of ‘life writing’ better acknowledges the diversity of life narratives across cultures and communities, a broadening of both generic and critical territory that serves critical analysis of texts incorporating elements of travel writing, slave narrative, memoir and history, among others. Gillian Whitlock similarly suggests that life writing signals a ‘more expansive category’ that remains ‘critical for de/colonizing the subject’⁹² in autobiographical literature, facilitating readings of colonial, outsider or marginalized individuals and groups in terms of their own experiences and articulation of self.

⁸⁹ Anderson , 4-5.

⁹⁰ David Huddart, *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2008), 2.

⁹¹ Huddart, 4.

⁹² Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

In light of this lively critical conversation between postcolonial and autobiographical theory, Bart Moore-Gilbert expresses surprise in his *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* that analysis of postcolonial life writing itself remains comparatively sparse.⁹³ He sketches an analytical framework for these literatures incorporating postcolonial and feminist criticism and identifies four key 'thematics of subjectivity' where auto/biographical writing and postcolonial theory intersect: centered and decentered selves, relational selves, embodied selves and located selves. Of particular relevance to my discussion of Mahomet and Equiano in this chapter is Moore-Gilbert's idea of the decentered self,⁹⁴ which enables 'the (post)colonial life-writer to evade the fixed identities through which (neo-)colonial stereotype, in particular, seeks to fix the (post)colonial subject in an inferior relation to the 'centre.'"⁹⁵ *Travels and Interesting Narrative* construct selfhood through the interplay between difference and subjectivity, never quite anchored to a single identity and unsettled in their relationship to the cultural modes of the colonial centre.

Citing *Interesting Narrative*, Moore-Gilbert describes Equiano's approach to self in terms of this decentering, a 'model of hybrid identity in which his identities remain consciously juxtaposed but distinct, rather than [...] becoming 'miscegenated' into a new,

⁹³ Moore-Gilbert notes that Anderson 'discusses only two postcolonial texts in a sub-section towards the end of her book.' Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* (London: Routledge, 2009), xvi.

⁹⁴ The idea of a divided self, constituted of several identities, first emerges within the field of European psychoanalysis over the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, advanced by Sigmund Freud and William James; postmodern and poststructuralist theorists like Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida employ the notion of 'decentering' to destabilize the fixity of self and identity, emphasizing instead concepts of multiplicity, heterogeneity and difference.

⁹⁵ Moore-Gilbert, 15.

unified, whole.’⁹⁶ The subjective self in *Interesting Narrative* is ‘decentered’ insofar as it not static, moving between African and European cultural spaces as Equiano alternately casts himself as African slave, Christian freedman and British gentleman. Self in Mahomet’s *Travels* is similarly destabilized and voiced variously as Indian, Muslim, British soldier and English immigrant.⁹⁷ Javed Majeed, for instance, remarks on the ‘double consciousness of his travelogue’ and the ‘divided and vacillating nature’⁹⁸ of his autobiographical narrative, noting that Mahomet’s account of Indian landscape and geography is rendered in the language of English pastoral and poetic sublime.

Colonial writers positioned between cultural worlds, as Elleke Boehmer writes, ‘were able to borrow from several traditions, yet belonged to no one. In the face of their uneasy marginality or supplementarity, they would turn in time to what might be called their own — their own experience of environment, migration, or invasion, as the case might be — to find a position for self-reconstruction.’⁹⁹ In context of postcolonial life writing, self in Mahomet and Equiano’s autobiographical accounts is complicated by shifting and uncertain cultural affiliations. Both authors elide cultural boundaries by incorporating insider and outsider perspectives in their narratives, resisting universalizing impulses by stressing their unique and uncommon lived experiences. The following section

⁹⁶ Moore-Gilbert, 13.

⁹⁷ Though, interestingly, not explicitly as a Christian convert. Apart from a reference to ‘our first mamma, Eve,’ (Mahomet, 108) there is scant mention of Mahomet’s religious beliefs.

⁹⁸ Javed Majeed, *Autobiography, Travel, and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru, and Iqbal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 66.

⁹⁹ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111.

discusses how their movement between these spaces is animated by creative narrative strategies that blur the line between art and history.

Facts, Fictions and Inventions

In 'The Autobiographical Pact,' Lejeune describes the 'referential pact' that separates autobiographical writing from fiction,

As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are *referential* texts [...] they claim to provide information about a 'reality' exterior to the text, and so submit to a test of verification. Their aim is not simple verisimilitude, but a resemblance to the truth. Not 'the effect of the real,' but the image of the real [...] The formula for it would [be] 'I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.' The oath rarely takes such an abrupt and total form; it is a supplementary proof of honesty to restrict it to the *possible* (the truth such as it appears to me, inasmuch as I can know it, etc., making allowances of lapses of memory, errors, involuntary distortions, etc.)¹⁰⁰

Lejeune is referring here to autobiographical authors' implicit commitment to truthfulness and factuality in their texts, an 'image' of reality as best recalled and transcribed by the writer, allowing for inadvertent misrepresentation introduced by error. In *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative*, however, fictive interventions are deliberately crafted and inserted into the text. The texts strategically prioritize the impression of verisimilitude over an

¹⁰⁰ Lejeune, 22.

unembellished recitation of experience,¹⁰¹ reflecting what Paul John Eakin describes as the interplay between '[the] art of memory and [the] art of the imagination.'¹⁰² Within Eakin's framework of autobiography and life writing as outlined in *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*, Mahomet and Equiano may be understood as 'both artists and historians, negotiating a narrative passage between the freedoms of imaginative creation on the one hand and the constraints of biographical fact on the other.'¹⁰³

In their discussion of cultural identity and life writing in *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson observe that autobiographical storytelling 'is drawn from multiple, disparate, and discontinuous experiences and the multiple identities constructed from and constituting those experiences'¹⁰⁴ — and that the subjective self in life writing may be relational, contingent and negotiated, comprising a 'fluidity of identities in movement.'¹⁰⁵ This mode of life writing may be best understood as a 'performative act,'¹⁰⁶ where the narrating voice constructs a 'version of self'¹⁰⁷ in the narrated subject through the selective inclusion or omission of information. The mediating role of the narrating voice, then, is the creative mechanism by which the narrated self straddles the historical and literary; by arranging discontinuous life events and experiences into a coherent

¹⁰¹ As Whitlock writes of *Interesting Narrative*, 'in the case of Equiano, 'authenticity' is not the same as veracity, or truthfulness to lived experience.' (p. 21).

¹⁰² ¹⁰² Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 5-6.

¹⁰³ 3.

¹⁰⁴ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 35.

¹⁰⁵ Smith and Watson, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Smith and Watson, 47.

¹⁰⁷ Smith and Watson, 60.

structure, occasionally supported by fictive interventions or details borrowed from contemporary sources.

As Michael Fisher notes, Mahomet lifts passages from Jemima Kindersley's *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe... and the East Indies* (1777) and John Henry Grose's *Voyage to the East Indies* (1766)¹⁰⁸ when describing local customs and habits. Similarly, many of Equiano's accounts of Igbo practice are extracted from Anthony Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea: Its Situation, Produce, and the General Disposition of its Inhabitants, With an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, Its Nature, and Lamentable Effects* (1771). What's more, according to Vincent Carretta, eighteenth-century documents and naval records indicate Equiano was born in South Carolina, not Africa, and that many of the text's most evocative moments, including the journey through the Middle Passage from Africa to the Caribbean and North America, are 'probably fictitious.'¹⁰⁹ The autobiographical voices at play in *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative*, then, are more productively engaged as a literary devices rather than historically-accurate testimonies. This is the space where Mahomet and Equiano construct self and cultivate colonial knowledge — the interaction between the historical and the literary, experience and aesthetics.

Co-Constituting Colonial Knowledge

¹⁰⁸ Fisher estimates Mahomet 'borrowed' and paraphrased up to seven percent of the words in *Voyage to the East Indies* in his text.

¹⁰⁹ Vincent Carretta, *Equiano: The Biography of a Self-Made Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), xvi.

In his introduction to *Travels*, Michael Fisher cites Mahomet and Equiano's 'non-European perspectives on, and participation in, the imperial process' as an example of the 'multilaterality of that process,'¹¹⁰ or the interconnectedness and potential fluidity of colonial relationships. Mahomet, he writes, stands between the British and Indian cultures 'rather than as wholly part of either'¹¹¹ — a characterization equally applicable to Equiano in *Interesting Narrative*. Both writers' texts pitch the narrative self as a culturally co-constituted persona that does not hold a fixed position in relation to colonial social or racial hierarchies: they move between these cultural spheres, not necessarily committing wholly to either. When Mahomet's narrator copies accounts and descriptions from Kindersley or Grose, he reproduces European perspectives on Indian cultural practice — but when he paraphrases or 'emulates'¹¹² these accounts, adding detail drawn from his own experiences, he adopts the posture of an insider with specialized knowledge of these activities.¹¹³ Equiano's narrative similarly manipulates its central authorial voice, subverting contemporary notions of African racial inferiority in order to underline the injustices of racial oppression and establish a cultural equivalency between Europeans and the Igbo. In employing these 'in-between' selves to illuminate local and indigenous cultures for a Western readership, both authors engage with what Eugene Irschick characterizes as a dialogic system of colonial knowledge production.

¹¹⁰ Michael Fisher, Preface to *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xiii-xxiii (p. xix).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Fisher, 'Dean Mahomet in Ireland and England (1784-1851)' in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, 135-181 (p. 138).

¹¹³ Fisher cites a passage where Mahomet 'borrows' the subject of chewable betel stimulant 'catchoo' from Kindersley — he lifts entire sentences, but also provides additional details relating to where and how it is administered socially.

Colonial knowledge refers broadly to the material body of maps, literature, recorded information and data that shaped European understanding of colony and colonial subjects. The processes by which local cultures and cultural experiences are collected, organized and parsed as part of a colonial episteme are closely related to what Said describes in *Orientalism* as ‘the acquisition of Oriental material and its regulated dissemination as a form of specialized knowledge.’¹¹⁴ This material, Said suggests, contributes to the categories of racial, linguistic and cultural difference that mark the boundaries between colonizer and colonized, representing the discursive logic of empire that engenders alterity by pitching European identity against indigenous histories. Said’s idea of colonial Oriental studies as Western discursive hegemony, ‘a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness,’¹¹⁵ has been disputed by critics like Irschick, who insist that the colonial and imperial episteme was in fact ‘a complex form of collaboration between colonizers and colonized.’¹¹⁶

This collaborationist model, where knowledge and meaning may be produced through intercultural dialogue and negotiation, frames this chapter’s theoretical perspective. In his introduction to *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895*, Irschick writes of South Indian interaction with British colonizers,

The interaction through which new formulations of territory and identity were forged was dialogic and heteroglot in nature. Cultural negotiations regarding

¹¹⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 165.

¹¹⁵ Said, 6.

¹¹⁶ Phillip B. Wagoner, ‘Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45.4 (2003), 783-814 (p. 783).

contested meanings involved many voices in a dialogue with unexpected outcomes. Certainly, the purposes inspiring these myriad voices were often contradictory or focused on entirely different problems and proposed solutions. The history that emerged from this set of dialogues, then, created discursive structures that have served several ends at once and over time [...] British and local interpreters participated equally in constructing new institutions with a new way of thinking to produce a new kind of knowledge.¹¹⁷

Colonial knowledge, Irschick suggests, is a complex dialogic undertaking that involves the participation of colonized groups and agents. The production of colonial knowledge is a collaborative endeavour, not the monologic imposition of hegemony upon inert local communities.¹¹⁸ Mahomet and Equiano's shifting cultural identities in *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative* position their narrators in an unsettled, ambivalent space within this exchange. At times, they play the part of 'local interpreter' explaining indigenous customs to Western readers; at others, they establish cultural continuity with the same audience. As Gaurav Desai outlines in *Subject to Colonialism*, 'most productive readings of the colonial library are bound to be those that read the texts not as reflections of particular colonial relations but rather [...] constitutive of them.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History: Constructing South India, 1795-1895* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 4-6.

¹¹⁸ C. A. Bayly writes that by 1880, 'Indians were increasingly producing their own knowledge from reworked fragments of their own tradition melded with western ideas and conveyed through western artefacts.' C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (p. 371).

¹¹⁹ Gaurav Desai, *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-Fashioning and the Colonial Library* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 4.

Rozina Visram notes of *Travels*, the first English-language text to be published by an Indian, 'as a historical document, it provides a valuable 'Indian voice,' describing [...] another version of [India's] conquest, different from existing European accounts.'¹²⁰ Mahomet's descriptions of India's landscapes and physical geography, as well as of its cities and peoples, were the first to provide an 'insider' native account in English, 'giving us an Indian perspective to set alongside European contemporary accounts.'¹²¹ His discussion of landscape, for instance, reflects the co-constitutive, intercultural, complexion of this endeavour, seeing as a native and writing for his English readership in the familiar aesthetic context of 'the sublime and the picturesque'¹²² —

Our situation was extremely pleasant; the tents being almost covered with the spreading branches of mangoe and tamarind trees, which under the rigours of a torrid sun, afforded a cool shade, and brightened the face of the surrounding country; whilst the Ganges, to heighten the beauty of the varied landscape rolled its majestic flood behind us.¹²³

Similarly, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* imparts an insider account of West African cultural traditions and social practices, as well as an intimate narrative of slave experience. As in *Travels*, this local and specialized information is for the benefit of a Western readership — in Equiano's case, to convince his audience of a shared humanity between Europeans and Africans and to re-define the practice of slavery from the perspective of its

¹²⁰ Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 39.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Majeed, 62.

¹²³ Mahomet, 56.

victims. His text's opening address to the British parliament sets these thematic conceits in motion:

Permit me, with the greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine Narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your august assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen [...] Through the mysterious ways of Providence [...] I have thence obtained to the knowledge of the Christian religion, and of a nation which, by its liberal sentiments, its humanity, the glorious freedom of its government, and its proficiency in arts and sciences, has exalted the dignity of human nature.¹²⁴

Equiano turns to European literary tropes in developing this argument alongside his autobiographical exposition, describing his text as both a history and a memoir,¹²⁵ two popular modes of life writing that eighteenth-century readers considered particularly instructive.¹²⁶

Travels and Interesting Narrative hold several of these narrative and thematic tropes in common. C.L. Innes' *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* speculates that Mahomet may have taken inspiration from the success of Equiano's text, noting how combine 'autobiography, participation in the military, and observations of scenes and peoples in other lands'¹²⁷ within an epistolary format. Both texts attempt to cultivate new

¹²⁴ Equiano, 7.

¹²⁵ Equiano, 31-32.

¹²⁶ Vincent Carretta, *Equiano: The Biography of a Self-Made Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 305-306.

¹²⁷ C.L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46-47.

knowledge of (and from) their narrators' respective lives, peoples and homelands while engaging with Western aesthetic traditions.

Mary Louise Pratt characterizes this particular form of colonial writing as 'autoethnography,' referring to 'instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms [...] partly collaborating with and appropriating the idioms of the conqueror.'¹²⁸ Autoethnographic texts like *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative* generate meaning through dialogic encounters between European and colonial systems of expression and representation. In this sense, the two texts represent sites of cultural negotiation, with their central narrative voices constructed upon the intercultural exchange between these worlds. The following section discusses how dialogical self theory provides a framework for interpreting these intersections between life writing, narrative, self and intercultural encounter in the texts.

Theorizing Self — Dialogical Self Theory, Polyphony and the Multi-voiced 'I'

This chapter's textual analysis of *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative* is guided by Hermans and Hermans-Konopka's idea of the 'third position'¹²⁹ within the dialogical self. Arising from conflicting, incompatible or unresolved initial I-positions,¹³⁰ the third position 'has the potential of unifying the [...] original ones without denying or removing their

¹²⁸ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9.

¹²⁹ Hermans, *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society*, ed. by Hubert Hermans and Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

¹³⁰ The location of self in relation to external or peripheral forces.

differences (unity-in-difference).¹³¹ Mahomet and Equiano's inconsistent cultural identification unsettles their narrative I-position, with *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative*'s competing cultural consciousnesses strategically prioritizing or subordinating these voices according to the narrative needs of the moment. Mahomet, for instance, employs the collective pronoun 'our' to indicate association with Indians or Britons, depending on context; Equiano similarly deploys 'we' in reference to Africans, Igbo and slaves or Christians, Britons and Europeans. In both cases, their conflicting cultural consciousnesses are united in the voice of the narrated self, the 'I,' even as these differences persist. Importing Hermans' framework into a literary context, we can establish a rubric for analysis of self in *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative*: 1) identifying the 'I-positions' in a text, 2) identifying sites of contestation within the self among these positions, 3) identifying the creative and narrative processes enacted in an effort to bridge these gaps, and 4) identifying the third position that emerges from these opposing positions.

In a passage reminiscent of Bakhtin's idea of polyphony, Hermans writes, 'dialogical self theory acknowledges multiplicity, and multi-positionality [...] as a cornerstone of the self. Given this multiplicity, we have argued for unity and continuity in terms of combination and integration of positions, at the same time recognizing and maintaining their relative autonomy.'¹³² As with Bakhtin's contention that the voice of the polyphonous novel is characterized by the intermixture and interdependence of different consciousnesses and conventions within it,¹³³ so too does the dialogical self potentially

¹³¹ Hermans, 10.

¹³² Hermans, 162.

¹³³ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

contain several I-positions continuously interacting with one another within a unified self. In *Travels and Interesting Narrative*, polyphony marks the arrangement of diverse cultural material and narrative tropes resolving into a single literary voice, a self between cultures.

Another critical framework in the analysis of literary self and colonial autobiographical writing is provided by Henry Louis Gates' 1985 essay 'Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes.' Referring to early Anglo-African life writing, Gates writes, 'the narrated, descriptive 'eye' was put into service as a literary form to posit both the individual 'I' of the black author as well as the collective 'I' of the race.'¹³⁴ The work of early black autobiographical writers in English, he argues, was instrumental in shaping European knowledge of black cultural histories in Africa; taken together, these 'individual histories [...] intended to narrate in segments the larger yet fragmented history of blacks in Africa, now dispersed throughout a cold New World.'¹³⁵ Though the notion that these black authors would, in Gates' words, 'create, or re-create, the image of the race in European discourse'¹³⁶ invites essentialist interpretations of black and African identity — the problematic category of a 'black race,' for instance — the idea of the multi-voiced 'I' in these literatures is useful in context of DST and polyphony.

Transposing this framework upon the broader matrix of colonial life writing, the tension between personal self history and collective cultural history in narrative self calls attention to the associative implications of a text's narrative I-positions. The narrated-'I' in

¹³⁴ Henry Louis Gates, 'Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes' *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985), 1-20 (p. 11).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Travels and Interesting Narrative, the subject whose travels and interesting narrative is related to readers, is framed by both texts' titles as culturally alterior to Europe, 'A Native of Patna in Bengal' and 'Gustavus Vassa, the African'; the grammatical and syntactic strategies of the narrating-'I' re-casts the expression of this individual history as representative of a wider collectivity. This double-voiced 'I' is further complicated by its vacillation between European and non-European spheres — what sort of cultural knowledge and representation is achieved or lost in Mahomet and Equiano's constant re-alignment of self within Indian, African and Anglo identities?

The following sections examine Mahomet and Equiano's texts in light of these critical frameworks, opening with commentary on their historical contexts and biographical information, then engages close readings and textual analysis.

Dean Mahomet (1759-1851) and *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*

The mid-eighteenth century Bengal into which Dean Mahomet¹³⁷ was born marked a period of imperial upheaval and transition. Already in decline, the remaining vestiges the Mughal Empire continued to disintegrate, its territories besieged and plundered by Marathi, Punjabi, Afghan and Persian invaders, its Emperor politically isolated. At the same time, the British East India Company entrenched itself as the primary political and economic force in the region. The Company expanded its territorial footprint and influence in Bengal by waging military campaigns against hostile local rulers and colonial

¹³⁷ Critics have also rendered Mahomet's name as 'Din Muhammed,' 'Dean Mohamed,' or 'Dean Mohammed'; this project adopts the spelling found in *Travels*' text and frontispiece.

competitors in French and Dutch trading companies, as well as making political and economic arrangements with agreeable nawabs.

Over this period, the relationship between the British and the holdover 'nawabi bureaucracy',¹³⁸ regional administrators under the Mughals and nawabs, precipitated a culture of collaboration, with this elite Bengali class 'acting as intermediaries between the British and the other peoples of India.'¹³⁹ In *Travels*, Mahomet situates himself as part of this class, claiming lineage to the 'same race'¹⁴⁰ as the nawabs of Murshidabad, provincial rulers whose political authority in the area had long ago been ceded to the British. By the year of Mahomet's birth in Patna in 1759, the Company had assembled the Bengal Army, comprised of local recruits and hires commanded by British officers, to more aggressively defend and pursue its interests. Mahomet's father served in the army as *subadar*, or lieutenant, until his death in 1769 during battle, at which point Mahomet, aged eleven, himself joined as a camp follower under Anglo-Irish officer Godfrey Baker.

The majority of Mahomet's thirteen years with army between 1769 and 1782 were spent as camp follower, 'a member of Baker's entourage'¹⁴¹ rather than a full-fledged officer. He describes in *Travels* the company's movements through Bihar and Bengal, its encounters with the different peoples of these regions, clashes with Marathas and brigands, and deployments to Awadh, Calcutta and Baharampur. On Baker's January 1781 promotion

¹³⁸ Michael Fisher, 'Representations of India, the English East India Company, and Self by an Eighteenth-Century Indian Emigrant to Britain,' *Modern Asian Studies* 32.4 (1998), 891-911 (p. 892).

¹³⁹ Michael Fisher, 'The World of Eighteenth-Century India' in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ Mahomet, 35.

¹⁴¹ Fisher, 18.

to Captain, Mahomet was permitted to join the army as *jamadar*, or ensign, as part of a sepoy regiment. In contrast to his experiences as camp follower, Mahomet saw active combat duty in north-central India (modern-day Uttar Pradesh), including assignments to Kalpi, Benares, Ghazipur and Jaunpur.¹⁴² He chronicles these eventful postings in *Travels*, describing the entwined political origins of these conflicts, detailing his regiment's role in these battles and his subsequent promotion to *subadar*.

Baker's sudden resignation from the army in October 1782, following accusations he held an entire village for ransom,¹⁴³ however, prompted Mahomet to follow suit and he joined his friend and mentor in Calcutta for a year before emigrating to Ireland in 1784, settling in Cork. As Fisher notes,

Although thousands of Indians made the trip to Europe over these years, apparently no one else had exactly Dean Mahomet's status. Most were sailors, servants, wives, or mistresses of Europeans. A few were travellers or visiting dignitaries. Dean Mahomet clearly fit into none of these categories. In his decisions to remain in Britain as an immigrant, to create a distinct identity there, and to record his life in his own words, he remained unique during his lifetime.¹⁴⁴

While the recollections that frame *Travels'* narrative end at this point, Mahomet's life in Ireland and England was a busy one. Establishing a presence among Cork's 'Protestant

¹⁴² Fisher, 22-27.

¹⁴³ Fisher, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Fisher, 30.

elite,¹⁴⁵ he married Jane Daly, a member of the Anglican gentry in 1786 and published *Travels* in 1793 through subscription, supported the patronage of the ‘social elite of Ireland, both men and women.’¹⁴⁶ In 1807, Mahomet moved with his family to London, taking employment in a vapour bath establishment and introducing the ‘practice that he would make famous in England as ‘shampooing’ (therapeutic massage).’¹⁴⁷

A few years later, in 1809, Mahomet opened the first Indian restaurant in Britain, the Hindoostanee Coffee-House in London’s Portman Square. Though well-received, the enterprise drove him into bankruptcy and the family eventually moved to Brighton, where Mahomet returned to the medical bath industry. Advertising himself as a ‘shampooing surgeon’ and ‘inventor of Indian medicated vapour and shampooing,’¹⁴⁸ he and Jane operated ‘Mahomed’s Baths’ — which counted among its clientele British and European aristocracy and Kings George IV and William IV — until financial difficulties forced them out of business in 1841. Mahomet soon opened a new bath and shampoo establishment in another part of the city, which he headed until his death in 1851.

The fluidity that characterizes Mahomet’s personal life — marrying into an aristocratic family but ‘too distinctive to assimilate’¹⁴⁹ into this community, reinventing himself first as restaurateur and then as a practitioner of eastern healing arts¹⁵⁰ — is

¹⁴⁵ Michael Fisher, ‘Dean Mahomet in Ireland and England’ in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 135-137.

¹⁴⁶ Fisher, 137.

¹⁴⁷ Fisher, 148.

¹⁴⁸ Fisher, 160.

¹⁴⁹ Fisher, 137.

¹⁵⁰ Claiming in his popular medical casebook *Shampooing* to have completed medical training in India, Mahomet was obliged to ‘[modify] his life-story, increasing his putative age by a decade’ in order to accommodate the deception (p. 167).

mirrored in *Travels* attitude towards self and the I-position. The following analysis discusses Mahomet's narrative in terms of the dialogical self's third position and polyphony, and their relationship to the production of colonial knowledge

As Mona Narain observes, Mahomet 'speaks from a variety of subject positions — Indian, Muslim, colonial subject, British soldier, and immigrant in Ireland.'¹⁵¹ Susheila Nasta provides a similar critique in *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain*, writing,

His negotiation of a number of different cultural and racial roles [...] were self-consciously manipulative of the prevailing attitudes of the society he lived in; similarly, whilst drawing on the familiar epistolary genre of the European travel narratives of his time, he managed both in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* and in *Shampooing* to construct himself within a range of differently inflected positions. He thus avoided marking out an insupportable territory of conflict between East and West, colonizers and colonized, or the need to take up a distinctive cultural identity or political position.¹⁵²

Identifying the central I-positions that emerge within *Travels* is the first step towards building an understanding of how cultural identity and sites of cultural contestation engender strategies of self in *Travels*.

¹⁵¹ Mona Narain, 'Dean Mahomet's 'Travels,' Border Crossings, and the Narrative of Alterity,' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 49.3 (2009), 693-716 (p. 696).

¹⁵² Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 17.

At its very outset, the text complicates assumptions of self:

Since my arrival in this country, I find you have been very anxious to be made acquainted with the early part of my Life, and the History of my Travels: I shall be happy to gratify you; and must ingenuously confess, when I first came to Ireland, I found the face of every thing about me so contrasted to those *striking scenes* in India, which we are wont to survey with a kind of sublime delight, that I felt some timid inclination, even in the consciousness of incapacity, to describe the manners of my countrymen, who, I am proud to think, have still more of the innocence of our ancestors, than some of the boasting philosophers of Europe.¹⁵³

The I-positions laid out in this passage establish the self as both cultural insider and outsider. The use of ‘this country’ distances the speaker from Ireland — it is not ‘his’ country — and he invokes ‘my countrymen’ and ‘our ancestors’ in reference to his Indian background and heritage. Here, he speaks as an Indian and immigrant to Ireland, someone standing apart from Anglo-Irish cultural world. At the same time, he describes the ‘striking scenes’ in India as something ‘we are wont to survey with a kind of sublime delight,’ adopting the perspective of a curious Western observer of Indian custom. The I-position outlined here aligns the self as a member of the Anglo-Irish elite who make up *Travels*’ subscribers. Later in the text, in Letter XV, the speaker mentions ‘the dancing girls of this country,’¹⁵⁴ employing the language that sets him apart from Ireland to evoke the same sense of distance from India — even as he explains its regional traditions from the

¹⁵³ Dean Mahomet, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, ed. by Michael Fisher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 34.

¹⁵⁴ Mahomet, 70.

perspective of an insider with specialized knowledge. As Kate Teltscher observes, via Fisher, 'Dean Mahomed initially represents himself as a native of India, but for most of the account the author shares the perspective of European of officers in the Company Army, as well as occasionally locating himself among the Anglo-Irish gentry.'¹⁵⁵ On these occasions, the I-position is unsettled, speaking from within Indian cultural experience while situated outside of it.

This strategy also serves to differentiate Mahomet's particular 'Indianness' from other Indians in the text, at times suggesting a narrative position that shares more in common with the British than with other regional cultural identities. Daniel Sanjiv Roberts argues that Mahomet's emphasis on his 'regional identity within India' as a Muslim native of Patna and 'his association with the war-mongering service of the company' reiterate and reinforce his cultural distance from other Indians in *Travels*, 'the 'Pahareas' (*paharis*, or hill-tribals), the 'blacks' (dark-skinned south-Indians of Chennai, formerly Madras), the Hindus, and the various castes of India.'¹⁵⁶ This distance is rendered through two distinct I-positions — a British officer surveying enemy combatants, and a 'native' offering specialized insight into Indian cultural practice.

From the latter perspective, Mahomet describes the 'pahareas' who attack a British encampment 'licentious savages',¹⁵⁷ the Fulwherea (Pulwara, Uttar Pradesh) villagers who

¹⁵⁵ Kate Teltscher, 'The Shampooing Surgeon and the Persian Prince: Two Indians in Early Nineteenth-century Britain,' *Interventions* 2.3 (2000), 409-423 (p. 414).

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, "In the Service of the Honourable East India Company': Politics and Identity in Dean Mahomet's *Travels* (1794),' *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 24 (2009), 115-134 (p. 133).

¹⁵⁷ Mahomet, 55.

rob and kidnap him as ‘licentious barbarians,’¹⁵⁸ the ‘Morattoes’ (Marathis from central and west-central India) as given to ‘depredation’¹⁵⁹ and the ‘unruly natives’¹⁶⁰ of Jouanpour (Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh) as ‘awed into submission by the terror of our arms.’¹⁶¹ These antagonistic characterizations are embedded within descriptions of conflict and confrontation, where the narrated subject is no longer framed as a ‘native of Patna,’ but as a British serviceman; in these passages, the narrating-‘I’ speaks as part of the British company. Referring to the company’s victory over Marathi forces in ‘Ganlin’ (Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh), for instance, Mahomet writes,

The enemy hitherto regarding any intention of disturbing them, as the greatest presumption, attributed our success to the divine interposition: such an attempt was indeed above common conception, and it had never succeeded, but for the terror, with which the boldness of the enterprise, had struck the unwary dupes of heedless security. The greatness of the undertaking, reflects the highest honour on the Officers and men employed in it; and proves the general opinion that there is no difficulty so arduous which may not be subdued, by the resolution and perseverance of a British soldier.¹⁶²

The aggrandized collective history articulated by this I-position, of ‘our success,’ is not Indian, but British — a narrative turn reflected in text’s use of pronouns.

¹⁵⁸ Mahomet, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Mahomet, 110.

¹⁶⁰ Mahomet, 123.

¹⁶¹ Mahomet, *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Mahomet, 113.

Only once in the entire body of *Travels* does 'we' explicitly refer to Indians, at its very beginning, 'The people of India, in general, are peculiarly favoured by Providence [...] we are still more happy in the exercise of benevolence and good-will to each other, devoid of every species of fraud or low cunning. In our convivial enjoyments, we are never without our neighbours.'¹⁶³ In every other instance, 'we' and 'our' describe fellow members of Baker's company and the army. Here again, however, ambiguity and uncertainty is introduced: though the army is an instrument of British governance, the regiment itself would have largely been made up of Indians. In this sense, allusions to 'our army'¹⁶⁴ and 'our march'¹⁶⁵ unsettle the narrating I-position: it may align with the British when referring to the army as a whole, or Indian if it is referring to the soldiers within the regiment. The I-positions rendered through these collective pronouns address issues of belonging, weighing membership within the Bengal army corps against membership as part of 'the people of India.' Textually, the former adopts a clear position of dominance.

By contrast, Mahomet adopts a much more nuanced tone when speaking as a 'native' cultural informant, even as he seeks to differentiate himself from his 'countrymen.'¹⁶⁶ When Mahomet speaks as an Indian cultural insider, he speaks as a certain kind of Indian, emerging from a particular social, economic and cultural position, and maintaining, in Majeed's view, an 'ethnographic distance between [himself] and other

¹⁶³ Mahomet, 34.

¹⁶⁴ Mahomet, 73.

¹⁶⁵ Mahomet, 86.

¹⁶⁶ Mahomet, 34.

Indians who are treated as distantly alien'¹⁶⁷ In Letter V, for instance, he lists the various low-caste workers attached to the company:

Seven hundred attendants [...] were occasionally employed, as the army moved their camp, in pitching and striking the tents, composed of the lowest order of the people residing in the country, and forming many distinct tribes, according to their various occupations.¹⁶⁸

While Mahomet has already established himself as a descendent of noble *nawabi* 'races,' other Indians belong to 'tribes.'¹⁶⁹ The term race appears twice in *Travels*' narrative, referring once to Mahomet's ancestry, and a second time to the decline of Mogul nobility. Tribe, on the other hand, is employed exclusively in the description of other Indians, usually as a means of describing cultural practices or temperament of a particular group of peoples — 'the former natives of this part of the world, whose purity of manners is still perpetuated by several tribes of their posterity';¹⁷⁰ 'you will now expect from me, an account of the Hindoos, the natives of this country; who are classed into four tribes';¹⁷¹ 'the Gentoos are very numerous here, particularly the tribe of the Banyans';¹⁷² 'a tribe of

¹⁶⁷ Majeed, 156.

¹⁶⁸ Mahomet, 44-45.

¹⁶⁹ In eighteenth-century European dictionaries and encyclopedias, race refers to family and lineage, often connoting respectability and nobility. Samuel Johnson defines 'race' as 'a family ascending; family descending; a generation, a collective family' (p. 749). He defines 'tribe' as 'a distinct body of the people as divided by family, or fortune, or any other characteristick,' noting 'it is often used in contempt' (p. 945). Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755).

¹⁷⁰ Mahomet, 48.

¹⁷¹ Mahomet, 81.

¹⁷² Mahomet, 99.

Morattoes, who lived by robbery.¹⁷³ Rhetorically, *Travels*' I-positions participate in the collective of race, but distance themselves from tribes of Others, 'these men' and the 'natives of this part of the world.' There is little in the way of cultural affinity or kinship in his accounts of these Other Indians.

Establishing a link between 'distinct tribes' and 'occupations,' these workers' low-caste/cultural identities and their jobs, the Letter details their roles within the company:

We had a certain number of these men appointed to attend the garrison [...] Lascars [sailors and shipmen], Cooleys [labourers], Besties [*bhistis*, water-carriers] and Charwalleys [cleaners and janitors].

The Lascars' [role] was to pitch and strike the tents and marquees; load and unload the elephants, camels, bullocks, waggon &c. The Cooleys were divided into two distinct bodies for different purposes; to carry burthens, and to open and clear the roads through the country, for the free passage of the army and baggage: The Besties were appointed to supply the men and cattle with water: and the Charwalleys, who are the meanest class of all, were employed to clean the apartments, and do other servile offices.¹⁷⁴

Here, too, Mahomet effects a narrative distancing. In addition to his use of the determinant 'the,' which fixes these workers as objects of description, he describes their menial responsibilities as something essentially natural to their cultural identity, in-built through

¹⁷³ Mahomet, 111.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

caste. In Letter XVIII, he specifically describes caste as synonymous with ‘tribe,’¹⁷⁵ further writing that ‘this distinction of the people into different classes, seems to be an institution of some antiquity, and probably will continue unaltered till the end of time, so steady and persevering is every individual in his attachment to his respective cast.’¹⁷⁶ Within *Travels*’ rhetorical framework, then, these lascars, coolies, *bhistis* and charwallahs are Others, part of the collectivized category ‘the natives,’ lacking agency and fated to perform a particular social function by virtue of their caste. Mahomet, on the other hand, inhabits a specific subjectivity — ‘a native of Patna’ — and transcends caste designation through both a sense of personal agency, in joining the British army and eventually travelling to England and Ireland, and his Muslim faith. Both narrating and narrated I-positions reiterate this distance between Mahomet and his ‘countrymen.’

Speaking from the perspective of a British officer in Letter XXXI, Mahomet details the aftermath of a skirmish between his company and villagers near Kanpur after a Sepoy roused a ‘peasant’s resentment’¹⁷⁷ by trampling through his plantation —

A few of the peasantry, who beheld me thus struggling for life, ran to my assistance, and after supporting me to the next cottage, kindly ministered what relief was in their power [...] Next morning, finding myself tolerably restored, I made my acknowledgements to these humane people [...] From the early intelligence of the Seapoy, who escaped before me, the greatest surprize, and even doubt of the reality of my existence at my arrival, was almost graven on every countenance, as the

¹⁷⁵ Mahomet, 82.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Mahomet, 114.

prevailing opinion unanimously agreed on by all parties, was, that I had fallen a sacrifice with the other Seapoy to the rage and resentment of the country people.¹⁷⁸

Unlike the socially and culturally defined ‘tribes’ of Indians *Travels* usually addresses, ‘the peasantry’ in this extract strategically represents an undifferentiated collectivity of peoples. This subtle shift in narrative tone allows Mahomet to propose a sense of humanity among Indians in general. As Majeed suggests, he ‘tries to humanise such scenes, calling attention to Indians as human subjects, and stressing a shared humanity with the British.’¹⁷⁹ Acknowledging the ‘rage and resentment’ of locals, he attributes the unfortunate incident to a sepoy’s ‘impertinent answer’¹⁸⁰ to an angry farmer, placing responsibility for the clash on the company rather than the natives — at the same time, however, the sepoy would himself have likely been Indian. Mahomet’s own position within this Letter is marked by a distance from both parties: he describes the sepoy as an ‘escort,’¹⁸¹ distinguishing the infantryman’s standing from his own rank within the company, while relying on his usual grammatical strategies to set himself apart from peasants and country people.

These distancing strategies bring matters of self and membership to *Travels*’ thematic fore — questions repeated in the text’s approach to Indian religion and religious practice. Though Narain argues he ‘speaks as an insider to [Indian] culture, yet as a Muslim, he holds himself at a distance from the dominant Indian Hindu culture and finds it more

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Majeed, 66.

¹⁸⁰ Mahomet, 114.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

productive to align himself with the British,¹⁸² Mahomet's treatment of Muslims and Muslim culture in India is equally detached. Claiming lineage from the Mughal Empire's Islamic court, the text reduces this association to a denotation of class rather than a spiritual disposition.¹⁸³ Throughout the text, both Muslims and Hindus are addressed in the abstract as concepts, as objects to be described, or both:

The Hindoo, as well as the Mahometan, shudders at the idea of exposing women to the public eye.¹⁸⁴

The native Indians, or Hindoos, are men of strong natural genius, and are, by no means, unacquainted with literature and science.¹⁸⁵

The Mahometans do not perform the circumcision, or fourth baptism until the child is seven years old, and carefully initiated in such principles of their religion as can be well conceived at such a tender age.¹⁸⁶

I shall now proceed to give you some account of the form of marriage among the Mahometans.¹⁸⁷

While wasteful war spread her horrors over other parts of India, [Benares] often escaped her ravages, perhaps secured by its distance from the ocean, or more

¹⁸² Narain, 698.

¹⁸³ As Fisher notes, though Mahomet likely converted to Christianity at some point and 'must have already become a member of the established Protestant Church' (p. 136) before his wedding to Jane, this is not mentioned in the text.

¹⁸⁴ Mahomet, 67-68.

¹⁸⁵ Mahomet, 83.

¹⁸⁶ Mahomet, 63-64.

¹⁸⁷ Mahomet, 65.

probably by the sacred character ascribed to the scene, which had, through many ages, been considered as the repository of the religion and learning of the Bramins, and the prevailing idea of the simplicity of the native Hindoos, a people unaccustomed to the sanguinary measures of, what they term, civilized nations.¹⁸⁸

Even as he describes his father's funeral, Mahomet frames the scene from a distance, a vignette of 'their religion': 'as he was a Mahometan, he was interred with all the pomp and ceremony usual on the occasion.'¹⁸⁹ The I-position derived from these extracts is located somewhere outside of religion, or outside of these particular religions, and more explicitly situates the self as an observer or historian of Indian culture rather than a participant in it.

The competing voices within the self identified in this section have so far included Indian, immigrant, Anglo-Irish gentry, Western cultural historian, Indian cultural insider, Indian cultural outsider, colonial outsider and British soldier. It is the interaction between these voices in *Travels* that frame the logic of its intercultural encounters through the reflexive folding of meaning upon meaning. The modal qualities of the cultural historian pitched against those of the cultural insider, for instance, construct a version of narrative self that addresses its readership within a framework of familiar literary tropes and conventions and supported by specialist cultural knowledge.

¹⁸⁸ Mahomet, 80.

¹⁸⁹ Mahomet, 36.

Though eighteenth-century readers would have been well-acquainted with the conversational tone of epistolary travelogue adapted in the text,¹⁹⁰ few practitioners of the genre could claim the narrative authority of being culturally a part of their subject matter. *Travels'* account of gambling in India, for example, is flush with colourful insider commentary unlikely to have been documented by Grose or Kindersley or treated with such generous humour:

Though few the individuals in India, who impose on the unwary by the arts of swindling and fraud, the jugglers, or slight-of-hand men, are numerous, and greatly excel in their tricks and deceptions, any thing of the kind exhibited in Europe. I have seen one of this astonishing class of men, place in the centre of a bazar, a little shrub or branch of a tree, with only a few leaves on it, over which he has thrown a cloth, and after playing for about half an hour, on a baslee, a sort of instrument consisting of a tube made of the shell of a pumbkin [sic], and connected with two small reeds, through which the sounds pass from the tube applied to the mouth, he has desired some person in the crowd to take off the cloth, and the same branch, to the surprise of every beholder, appeared laden with fruit and blossoms. It would be endless to describe their other deceptions, which are equally unaccountable as wonderful.¹⁹¹

This kind of interplay between the culturally-detached narrating-‘I’ and local knowledge resituates the self between cultural spaces, allowing the text to cultivate new approaches to

¹⁹⁰ Popular epistolary travel writing of the period include Daniel Defoe’s *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1727), James Russell’s *Letters from a Young Painter Abroad* (1750) and Tobias Smollett’s *Travels through France and Italy* (1766).

¹⁹¹ Mahomet, 107.

cultural practice. Betel chewing, for example, ‘denounced by Grose as a vicious habit,’¹⁹² is recast by Mahomet as something of a social obligation and hallmark of polite company —

So prevalent is the custom of chewing betel, that it is used by persons of every description; but it is better prepared for people of condition, who consider it a breach of politeness to take leave of their friends, without making presents of it. No one attempts to address his superior, unless his mouth is perfumed with it; and to neglect this ceremony even with an equal, would be deemed an unpardonable rudeness.¹⁹³

Having plagiarized sections of this account from Grose himself, Mahomet directly engages *Voyage to the East Indies* in his *Travels*, offering both a gentle correction to the former’s characterization of *catchoo* and a new perspective on its social function. He provides similar revision to Grose’s description of Islamic polygamous marriage as lacking a spiritual dimension — to Grose’s contention,

Every consideration, human and divine, seems to establish the preference of the European law permitting but one wife, to the polygamy and concubinage of the Orientalists¹⁹⁴

Mahomet counters,

The Mahometans keep a strict lent once in the year, in the month Ramzaun, for a space of thirty two days: during this time, they never sleep on a bed, nor cohabit

¹⁹² Teltscher, 414.

¹⁹³ Mahomet, 104.

¹⁹⁴ John Henry Grose, *Voyage to the East Indies* (London: S. Hooper, 1772), 137.

with their wives, and live only on rice and vegetables: they also abstain from off their usual enjoyments of chewing betel, and smoking tobacco, avoiding every kind of amusement, and spending the time in prayer, and the performance of charitable offices. They are so extremely tenacious of their principles that even under the painful longing of excessive thirst, they will not taste a drop of water, each day, till seven in the evening.¹⁹⁵

The narrating-I in these sections assumes the role of autoethnographer, who undertakes 'not to reproduce but to *engage* western discourses of identity, community selfhood, and otherness.'¹⁹⁶ Engaging colonial ethnographers like Grose allows Mahomet to critique European conceptions of India and Indians and assert his own first-hand authority and knowledge in these matters. This engagement is closely linked to Mahomet's ideas on writing and authorship in *Travels*.

The third position of self that emerges in Mahomet's *Travels* and its intertwining I-positions is that of the author. Mahomet draws explicit attention to the idea of authorship and *Travels* as a text-within-a-text in his narrator's address to the reader at the beginning of Letter I: 'the gratification of your wishes [...] is the *principal* incitement that engages me to undertake a work of this nature.'¹⁹⁷ In this sense, the text's epistolary format serves as a framing device upon which the central authorial voice projects the various self positions established in its body. As author, the narrative self is able to organize and synthesize these diverse and disparate positions into a single voice without diminishing or devaluing their

¹⁹⁵ Mahomet, 127.

¹⁹⁶ Pratt, 100.

¹⁹⁷ Mahomet, 34.

distinctive features, enacting a ‘unity-in-difference.’¹⁹⁸ In situating the authorial self at the centre of *Travels*, Mahomet dramatizes the collaborative features of colonial knowledge production. The third position brings together insider and outsider, Indian and Anglo-Irish immigrant in dialogue to negotiate and voice matrices of knowledge and experience.

As Vinay Dharwadker notes, ‘on the one hand, [Mahomet] started a new discourse about India in the same language, generic configuration, and stylistic canon as [the West]; but, on the other hand, he articulated his representation of an alternative Indian understanding of India explicitly as a counter-discourse, to theirs [...] to question, correct, or displace British representations of India.’¹⁹⁹ As author and writer, Mahomet commits to a re-examination of European discourses on India and its peoples. He invests in himself the authority and practice of British ethnography, a figure deeply familiar with Indian cultural experience but sufficiently detached from it to remain critical and analytical. The third position of author acknowledges these diverging I-positions in its textually unified register.

Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) and *The Interesting Narrative* (1789)

The first printing of Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African* in 1789 thrust its author into the heart of Britain’s abolitionist debate. Though slavery had been effectively banned in eighteenth-century England and Scotland through a series of legal decisions, the transatlantic slave trade

¹⁹⁸ Hermans, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Vinay Dharwadker, ‘The Historical Formation of Indian-English Literature,’ *Literary Cultures in History Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. by Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 199-267 (p. 205)

nevertheless flourished, fulfilling the demand for human chattel in the United States and West Indies. The founding of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade by Quakers and Anglicans in 1787 symbolized British civil society's mobilization against slavery amidst increasing political agitation for reform. Polemics composed by former slaves emerged as powerful testimonies against the industry — Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787), for example, invoked God and Bible in its furious condemnation of slavers and slave-runners. Pratt refers to these early slave narratives as 'self-descriptions structured to a degree in line with western literary institutions and western conceptions of culture and of self, yet in direct opposition to official ideologies of colonialism and slavery (which, among other things, excluded Africans from western conceptions of culture and of self);'²⁰⁰ this new testimonial literature, written by African slaves themselves, challenged Western conceptions of racial superiority and agitated against the transatlantic slave trade. The *Interesting Narrative*, Sukhdev Sandhu writes, 'is invaluable as a book about witnessing. It is a record of horrible things seen, horrible events from which the author would rather have averted his gaze, which, he hopes, might be brought to an end as a result of his describing them.'²⁰¹

It was in this political environment that *Interesting Narrative*'s first edition was published, prefaced with a direct appeal to Parliament to abolish the slave trade and a prominent advertisement of its subscriber list, which included the Prince of Wales and the

²⁰⁰ Pratt, 100.

²⁰¹ Sukhdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), 224.

Bishop of London. Featuring the striking image of a black author in gentlemanly eighteenth-century English garb and two names, one African and another European, Equiano's text advertises and anticipates the questions of self and identity posed by its narrative. As Whitlock writes, 'both the image and the name are hybrid and diasporic: British and African, individual and representative — speaking of and for himself and on behalf of others, and also staking a claim to a common humanity.'²⁰²

Equiano's tireless self-promotion and extensive book tours across England ensured that *Narrative* was both widely-read and received warmly in the press, with the author reproducing two particularly complimentary appraisals in his introduction to revised editions. The first of these critiques, selected by Equiano as establishment validation of his text, remarks, 'it is not improbable that some English writer has assisted him [...] for it is sufficiently well-written'²⁰³ and concludes that the author's exemplary dedication to Methodism — '[he] has filled many pages towards the end of his work, with accounts of his dreams, visions and divine influences [which] serves to convince us that he is guided by principle'²⁰⁴ — is worthy of particular commendation. The second is rather more corporeal in tone, observing that the *Interesting Narrative* 'appears to be written with much truth and simplicity'²⁰⁵ and that those opposed to slavery 'will find [their] humanity often severely

²⁰² Whitlock, 20.

²⁰³ *Monthly Review* in *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 12-13 (p. 13).

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ *The General Magazine and Impartial Review* in *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 13-14 (p. 14).

wounded by the shameless barbarity practiced towards the author's hapless countrymen in all our colonies,'²⁰⁶ finally urging readers to petition Parliament in support of abolition.

Curiously excluded from the *Narrative's* prefatory material, Mary Wollstonecraft's contemporaneous review of the text speaks warmly to Equiano's 'activity and ingenuity' and of the 'lively impression' made by his account of enslavement: 'many anecdotes are simply told, relative to the treatment of male and female slaves, on the voyage, and in the West Indies, which makes the blood turn its course; and the whole account of his unwearied endeavours to obtain his freedom, is very interesting.'²⁰⁷ She is gently critical of *Narrative's* uneven prose, described as a 'striking contrast [...] a few well written periods do not smoothly unite with the general tenor of the language'²⁰⁸, and decidedly cooler towards the latter half of the text, writing, 'the long account of his religious sentiments, and conversion to methodism, is rather tiresome.'²⁰⁹

While the two reviews incorporated into the *Interesting Narrative* shepherd readers toward the its two central readings, as spiritual biography and anti-slavery tract, Wollstonecraft's dismissal of Equiano's reflection on the divine as an arduous and ineffective literary dead-end was likely a factor in her review's omission from the text. Significantly, Wollstonecraft writes that in 'the latter part of the second volume [...] he is entangled in many, comparatively speaking, insignificant cares'²¹⁰ and that 'a kind of

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Analytical Review in The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), xxvii-xxix (p. xxviii).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft, xxviii-xxix.

²¹⁰ Wollstonecraft, xxviii.

contradiction is apparent: many childish stories and puerile remarks, do not agree with some more solid reflections'²¹¹ — though negatively valenced, Wollstonecraft appears to intuit the text's ability to inhabit many generic and textual spaces.

Both literary and historical, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* folds abolitionist agitation, racial treatise, slave narrative, travel writing, spiritual *bildungsroman*, Methodist publicity and European and Christian apologetics into the general shape of autobiography.²¹² Stylistically, Geraldine Murphy writes,

What had become a highly conventionalized genre by the mid-nineteenth century [...] was a much more fluid enterprise for Equiano. His *Narrative* incorporates elements of spiritual autobiography, the newly emerging secular success story, and the political discourse of the humanitarian/abolitionist movement, not to mention travel writing.'²¹³

Modern reappraisals of the *Narrative* have suggested an additional generic qualifier, suggesting that much of the text may be described as 'perhaps historical fiction.'²¹⁴

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Frank Schulze-Engler notes, *Interesting Narrative* 'has been hailed as one of the starting-points of African literature (and thus as a 'West African' text), as an 'ancestral text' for Black British literature (and thus as part of 'British' literary history), and as a classic slave narrative in the North-American tradition (and thus as part of 'American' literature).' Frank Schulze-Engler, 'Transcultural Modernities and Anglophone African Literature,' *Transcultural Modernities: Narrating Africa in Europe*, ed. by Elisabeth Bekers, Sissy Helff and Daniela Merolla (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 87-101 (p. 94).

²¹³ Geraldine Murphy, 'Olaudah Equiano: Accidental Tourist,' *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27.4 (1994), 551-568 (p. 553).

²¹⁴ Carretta, xxvii.

As described in his *Narrative*, Equiano was born in 1745 to a high-ranking elder in a 'charming fruitful vale'²¹⁵ in West Africa called Essaka. Kidnapped along with his sister at age eleven by members of a neighbouring tribe, Equiano was separated from his sibling and put to work for a chieftain in a village 'a great many day's journey from my father's house.'²¹⁶ Following a short period here, he was sold on to various African traders before being put aboard a slave ship bound for Barbados, finally ending up in Virginia, where he was sold to Michael Pascal, a lieutenant in the British navy, and transported back to England. Spending eight years with Pascal, and serving under him during the Seven Years' War, Equiano was sold again in 1763 to another seaman, Captain James Doran, and then to an American Quaker merchant in Montserrat named Robert King. Working West Indian shipping routes for three years, Equiano saved enough money to purchase his freedom through industrious petty trading, securing his document of manumission in 1766 and returning to London.

Over the following decade, Equiano visited Turkey and Italy (1768), joined an ill-fated Arctic expedition (1773) and shipped off to Central America as a missionary and to help oversee the construction of a plantation colony (1775). In 1787, he was asked to participate in a London charity's relocation of the 'black poor'²¹⁷ to Sierra Leone and duly appointed Commissary of Provisions and Stores. Alarmed by the gross mismanagement of funds and resources by local agents — resulting in a lack of adequate supplies for the journey — Equiano complained to the naval authorities and was dismissed from his post

²¹⁵ Equiano, 32.

²¹⁶ Equiano, 48.

²¹⁷ Equiano, 226.

for his troubles. The following year, he petitioned the Queen to formally abolish slavery and continued to campaign against the slave trade alongside European abolitionists. In 1792, Equiano married Englishwoman Susannah Cullen, fathering two daughters. He died in London in March 1797, a year after his wife's passing.

Despite *Interesting Narrative's* autobiographical framing, the details of Equiano's early life and adolescence are uncertain. The front matter of the book's 2003 Penguin edition²¹⁸ alludes to this ambiguity, prefacing the text with a caveat: 'By his own account, Olaudah Equiano was born in 1745 in what is now southeastern Nigeria, enslaved at the age of eleven, and sold to English slave traders, who transported him to the West Indies.'²¹⁹ Building upon the investigative groundwork laid in his 1999 essay 'Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity,' Vincent Carretta's comprehensive 2005 volume *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* suggests some of the events outlined in *Interesting Narrative* are likely more indebted to invention than recollection. As Anthony Carrigan writes,

Where does 'memory' end and 'fiction' begin? Equiano's text offers an extremely subtle projection and recollection of 'self,' collected and fractured, at the moment of writing, along with a palimpsest of that dynamic 'self's' numerous interactions with personal and cultural memory over the course of a lifetime.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Edited by Carretta, who also contributes an introduction and notes.

²¹⁹ Carretta, i.

²²⁰ Anthony Carrigan, 'Negotiating Personal Identity and Cultural Memory in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*,' *Wasafiri* 21:2 (2006), 42-47 (p. 47).

An examination of how Equiano manipulates self, identity and I-positions within *Interesting Narrative* builds towards a literary response to these considerations.

The idea of the *Interesting Narrative* as a product of literary imagination rather than a historically accurate account of its author's life is not new. In a 1982 essay titled 'Facts into Fiction: Equiano's Narrative Reconsidered,' Nigerian academic S. E. Ogude writes,

Let us observe here that Equiano the narrator and Equiano the commentator are two different characters who perform different roles in the overall conception of the book. The narrator tends to be fictional in his accounts, while the commentator shows evidence of the historical man [...] Equiano's achievement [...] lies in his talent as a compelling narrator rather than in the authenticity of his narrative. The most interesting part of his story is the least reliable as a historical document. For Equiano's story of his early life in Africa is an imaginative reorganization of a wide variety of tales about Africa from an equally wide range of sources.²²¹

While alluding to the historicity of the *Interesting Narrative*, what Ogude identifies here is fundamentally a literary strategy. Equiano cultivates two distinct positions within the narrating-I, each serving a clear purpose within the broader context of his treatise. The 'narrator' responsible for exposition and description and the 'commentator' who derives value from this knowledge.

These complementary I-positions are most effectively rendered in Equiano's account of the Middle Passage, where he concludes a long section of evocative narration

²²¹ S.E. Ogude, 'Facts into Fiction: Equiano's Narrative Reconsidered,' *Research in African Literatures*, 13.1 (1982), 31-43 (p. 31-2).

with commentary and instruction. On describing the deplorable conditions aboard the slave ship — ‘the loathsomeness of the stench’²²², the suffocating ‘closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate’²²³, the floggings and hardships endured by its enslaved cargo²²⁴ — Equiano turns to the moral and ethical instruction he intends his readership to gather from this information — ‘O, ye nominal Christians! Might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God? [...] Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.’²²⁵ As James Treadwell notes, Equiano’s decision to feature his experiences as slave as *Interesting Narrative*’s thematic focal point was unusual for slave narratives of the time — ‘his account of his abduction and enslavement powerfully emphasizes the miseries and cruelties he encountered [in] contrast with, say, the brief 1772 Narrative of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, which records the state of slavery in a rhetorically neutral register, reserving its literary energies for the Evangelical drama of conversion that is its main theme.’²²⁶

The centrality of narrative polyphony to *Narrative* signals a projection of self and identity that comprises many different and selves, identities and I-positions — as Anthony Carrigan notes in his essay ‘Negotiating Personal Identity and Cultural Memory in Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*,’ ‘individual and cultural memories are not merely subsumed or superseded, but survive in palimpsestic fashion, affecting the construction

²²² Equiano, 56.

²²³ Equiano, 58.

²²⁴ Equiano, 58-60.

²²⁵ Equiano, 61.

²²⁶ James Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783–1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168.

and understanding of identity and challenging notions of a single unified self.’²²⁷ I-positions in Equiano’s text are voiced as a European arrivant, displaced African, determined abolitionist, plantation overseer, fearful Igbo and Christian preacher, colonial subject and imperial collaborator.

As in *Travels*, Equiano’s deliberate and ambivalent application of pronouns variously positions him as African, Englishman or European. Throughout its experiential testimony, *Narrative* links Equiano’s identity to European markers — an African who is capable of feeling ‘almost an Englishman’²²⁸ even as he is enslaved; whose early religious upbringing held much in common with Jewish customs²²⁹; whose faith in scripture outstrips the devotion of the white ‘nominal Christians’²³⁰ involved in the slave trade; whose ‘unfortunate countrymen’²³¹ are oppressed Africans, but whose heart has ‘always been’ in England.²³² As Marion Rust observes, ‘Equiano at times assumes the voice of an imperialist speaking for abolition. If the British would only free the Africans, Equiano asserts, they would find them equally capable of refined manners.’²³³

At the same time, however, Equiano insists on his essential difference and distance from European peoples. Recalling his first encounter with whites, Equiano writes, ‘I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill

²²⁷ Carrigan, 44.

²²⁸ Equiano, 77.

²²⁹ Equiano, 41-5.

²³⁰ Equiano, 61.

²³¹ Equiano, 7.

²³² Equiano, 147.

²³³ Marion Rust, ‘The Subaltern as Imperialist: Speaking of Olaudah Equiano,’ *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*, ed. by Elaine K. Ginsberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 21-36 (p. 28).

me [...] I asked [if] we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair'²³⁴ and later describes overcoming 'those apprehensions and alarms which had taken such strong possession of me when I first came among the Europeans.'²³⁵ The most forceful instance of this distancing occurs during an early polemic shift in the narrative:

Let the polished and haughty European recollect that his ancestors were once, like the Africans, uncivilized, and even barbarous. Did Nature make them inferior to their sons? and should they too have been made slaves? Every rational mind answers, No.²³⁶

This conception of racial identity is reiterated in *Narrative's* use of 'countrymen' to describe both Africans and Englishmen. Self is marked by rhetorical utility: African victim when petitioning against racial oppression or relating injustices suffered with patience and dignity, Afro-European in authorial perspective or when addressing his European readership through cultural equivalency. As Murphy writes, 'as an indigenous ethnographer, he [...] blurs the boundaries between self and Other [...] formally as well as thematically, then, Equiano's portrait of manners and customs affirms similarity as much as Otherness.'²³⁷

The *Interesting Narrative's* main body of text is divided into three principal movements — pre-enslavement, captivity, and post-emancipation— with each section

²³⁴ Equiano, 55.

²³⁵ Equiano, 70.

²³⁶ Equiano, 45.

²³⁷ Murphy, 564.

shifting I-positions in order to reflecting the thematic concerns and instructive lessons Equiano intends to impart.

The first movement, spanning Chapter I through to Equiano's abduction very early in Chapter II, outlines the social organization of his fellow Igbo and the natural features of his African birthplace. The son of a chief who was frequently called upon to adjudicate disputes, Equiano relates the laws and customs of his countrymen, writing, 'the proceedings were generally short; and in most cases the law of retaliation prevailed [...] adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or death; a punishment which I believe is inflicted on it throughout most of the nations of Africa.'²³⁸ Recalling festivals held in honour of returning warriors or other matters of civic pride, Equiano writes, 'we are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets,'²³⁹ and describes the public dances that follow:

The assembly is separated into four divisions, which dance either apart or in succession [...] The first division contains the married men, who in their dances frequently exhibit feats of arms, and the representation of a battle. To these succeed the married women [...] The young men occupy the third; and the maidens the fourth. Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and as the

²³⁸ Equiano, 33.

²³⁹ Equiano, 34.

subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere.²⁴⁰

Continuing, he characterizes his country as a place where 'nature is prodigal of her favours [...] our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance.'²⁴¹ Socially, 'as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars'²⁴²; in terms of religion, 'the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun'²⁴³; regarding local customs, 'the natives are extremely cautious about poison [when] they buy any eatable the seller kisses it all round before the buyer, to shew him it is not poisoned.'²⁴⁴ Drawing an explicit parallel between the Igbo and Jewish peoples, most notably circumcision and ritual cleanliness, Equiano observes, 'like the Israelites in their primitive state, our government was conducted by our chiefs or judges, our wise men and elders; and the head of a family with us enjoyed a similar authority over his household with that which is ascribed to Abraham and the other patriarchs.'²⁴⁵ The critical glean offered at the end of Chapter I reminds Europeans that their ancestors were themselves 'like the Africans, uncivilized, and even barbarous'²⁴⁶, concluding with an invocation of the divine via a quotation from Acts of the Apostles.

In this first movement, Equiano incorporates a number of conflicting narrative voices and I-positions: the colonial travel writer providing anthropological reportage on a

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Equiano, 36-7.

²⁴² Equiano, 38.

²⁴³ Equiano, 40.

²⁴⁴ Equiano, 43.

²⁴⁵ Equiano, 41-4.

²⁴⁶ Equiano, 45.

distant and exotic land and its inhabitants; the European autoethnographer explaining the cultural phenomena of these peoples; the displaced African reminiscing fondly on the customs and traditions of his homeland; the Anglo-African social reformist accusing Europeans of institutionalized cultural chauvinism and racial oppression.

He writes, 'we are almost a nation of dancers,' of 'our dances' and 'our land,' but simultaneously refers to 'the natives' who are unaccustomed to 'refinements in cookery,' engage in un-Christian rituals, and worship a heathen god.²⁴⁷ The slippage from 'we' to 'they' is of particular interest: according to *Narrative's* thematic logic, 'they' are unrefined and taken to superstition, while 'we' is always positively situated. 'They' worship a non-Christian god,²⁴⁸ while 'our' social structures closely resemble Judeo-Christian institutions. Through this sustained effort, these pronouns assume a metonymic role. 'We' refers to African, Afro-English or Afro-European identity, while 'they' refers to a static and unchangingly primitive African subject. In this sense, Equiano's 'we' represents the third-position resolution of the conflicting I-positions described above. Considerable narrative authority is invested into this personal pronoun, which allows Equiano to simultaneously describe and be described, insider to both African and colonial cultural discourses. The third-position self serves as interlocutor, whose familiarity with African social customs and adapted British identity allow him normalize activities that might otherwise unsettle eighteenth-century readers.

²⁴⁷ Equiano, 35.

²⁴⁸ Equiano, 40.

The second movement, spanning Equiano's time as a slave until he purchases his freedom, marks a shift in tone from catalogue and description to action and chronicle. This section finds Equiano at his most forceful and evocative as he makes his case against the brutality and inhumanity of the slave trade. Within these sections, too, self and identity are coded through metonymy. In his account of boarding the slave ship before the Middle Passage, Equiano writes,

I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country.²⁴⁹

It is important to note the twin narrative strands at work in the text here: the symmetry between the narrating-'I' and the narrated-'I' in text. From a detached position of reflection and recollection, the former manipulates and shapes the latter's discursive position, pitting 'I' and 'our' against 'they' and 'their.' In a reversal of typical colonial 'othering,' the white Europeans collectivized under 'they' are rendered as racial aliens and defined in opposition to Equiano and his black countrymen.

²⁴⁹ Equiano, 55.

The *Interesting Narrative*'s final movement, an account of Equiano's life after slavery, moves sharply towards Methodist-tinged commentary. The following passage finds Equiano aboard a ship in the company of four Miskito Indian chiefs, one of whom Equiano attempts to convert to Christianity:

I was very much mortified in finding that they had not frequented any churches since they were here, to be baptized, nor was any attention paid to their morals. I was very sorry for this mock Christianity, and had just an opportunity to take some of them once to church before we sailed. [...] At last he asked me, 'How comes it that all the white men on board who can read and write, and observe the sun, and know all things, yet swear, lie, and get drunk, only excepting yourself?' I answered him, the reason was, that they did not fear God; and that if any one of them died so they could not go to, or be happy with God.²⁵⁰

This excerpt highlights the presence of another I-position that emerges towards the end of *Interesting Narrative*, the evangelist. Equiano's language in this passage is filtered through the voice of the colonial Christian preacher, to whom proselytism represents both a spiritual and civilizing imperative.²⁵¹

The mention of 'white men' is a particularly important point of thematic convergence, linking whiteness to Christianity, knowledge and civilization. In drawing attention to the Indian prince's regard of him as an equal among other whites aboard the

²⁵⁰ Equiano, 203-4.

²⁵¹ The stance complicates the text's opening chapter and its positive description of African custom — Igbo belief systems are not dissimilar to Miskito animism, which is uncharitably described in this section as a primitive characteristic of the spiritually uninitiated.

ship, Equiano is implicitly referring to the 'culture, education, and religion'²⁵² he shares with Europeans. At the precise moment when readers are most emphatically reminded of Equiano's blackness, he establishes a firm cultural and social contiguity with whiteness. In such instances, *Interesting Narrative* frames self as polyphonous as well as an integrative literary device marking points of intercultural and formal convergence — African slave and English citizen, autobiographical slave narrative and liberal political treatise, the Other's assertion of self and identity.

As linguistic anthropologist Elinor Ochs and psychologist Lisa Capps write in their essay 'Narrating the Self,' 'personal narrative simultaneously is born out of experience and gives shape to experience [and] in this sense, narrative and self are inseparable.'²⁵³ The literary self portrayed in Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* is a reflection of both the experiences of the dramatized self and the focussed critical commentary of its authorial counterpart. In this sense, the *Narrative's* subtle elision of race and identity into an elastic iteration of self is a calculated literary tactic designed to invigorate Equiano's narrative position and legitimize his criticism of European racial prejudice. By 'maneuvering the initially black African I of his narrative into the position of a secure cultural insider [...] the loyal British social reformer,'²⁵⁴ Equiano is able to critique racial oppression from both within the colonial establishment and outside it.

²⁵² Carretta, *Equiano: The Biography of a Self-Made Man*, 183.

²⁵³ Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, 'Narrating the Self,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 25 (1996), 19-43 (p. 20).

²⁵⁴ Susan M. Marren, 'Between Slavery and Freedom: The Transgressive Self in Olaudah Equiano's Autobiography,' *PMLA* 108 (1993), 94-105 (p. 95).

Through this deliberate and considered conflation of race, self and agency, Equiano arrives at a final third-position of self: the voice of Christian egalitarianism, where all humanity is seen as equal by God, regardless of race. This voice chimes with contemporary approaches to abolition within Christian writing — as Alan Lester notes in *Imperial Networks Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain*, ‘in missionary representations, African slaves were the vulnerable, innocent, child-like victims of European brutality.’²⁵⁵ Equiano employs this third position to critique Eurocentric systems of cultural knowledge on its own terms. The *Interesting Narrative*’s application of cultural memory, the religious, linguistic and social customs and orders recalled by Equiano, are contextualized within this Christian framework of equality and challenge the racist body of cultural knowledge offered up as justification for slavery.

Carretta’s introduction documents one such example of hostility in a 1788 letter to *The Morning Chronicle*,

If I were even to allow some share of merit to Gustavas Vasa, Ignatius Sancho, &c. it would not prove equality more, than a pig having been taught toe fetch a card, letters, &c. would shew it not to be a pig, but some other animal.²⁵⁶

A sampling of eighteenth-century periodicals sketches some of the broad arguments in defense of the slave trade — that Africans are an inferior ‘species’ of human, European merchants require slaves to conduct their business and pursue commerce, that Europeans

²⁵⁵ Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), 30.

²⁵⁶ Letter in Carretta, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, xv.

treat slaves better than African slave-holders, that the treatment of African slaves is reasonable compared to the situation of domestic labourers in Europe;

That the negroes are a species of the human race, I cannot deny; but that they are an inferior, and a very different order of men, I sincerely believe. I have seen and conversed much with them in what we call their state of slavery; and yet by living long with in the island of Jamaica, it never was my lot to see those acts of cruelty and oppression with which the native white men of those climates are now accused [...] There are in our West-India islands [...] a great number of free negroes and mulattoes, who possess slaves of their own; and it is among them only cruelties are exercised.²⁵⁷

Has not a planter as much right to his lands, negroes, cattle, and buildings as any man in England has to his property, secured to him by the same common laws? [...] I will venture to affirm, that slaves of the West Indies are better taken care of, and treated with more humanity, than the poor in England are [...] Who can say that the wretched Englishmen, who work in the dark tin and coal mines England and seldom see the light of the sun are near to happy as a West India negroe?²⁵⁸

The servitude [...] of the negroes is to them a happy change. It relieves them from the barbarous despotism of their native tyrants, and subjects them to more civilized

²⁵⁷ Letter in *The Scots* (Edinburgh: 1788), 474-475.

²⁵⁸ Letter in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge* (Dublin: 1788), 363-363.

masters. [...] To give the negro freedom, would be to destroy his happiness; for slavery is become congenial to his nature.²⁵⁹

In *Narrative*, the third position counters this dehumanizing rhetoric by pulling together a range of cultural signifiers within a Christian context in order to demonstrate the essential humanity in African identity. Equiano subverts the racial hierarchies in these discourses of alterity and otherness through the lens of Christian ethics and morality, challenging the ‘nominal Christians’ of Europe to validate their own systems of culture and belief.

In a passage describing the lives of African slaves in the West Indies, for instance, he asks why their degradation and suffering at the hands of whites persists in spite of Scriptural censure —

The wretched field-slaves, after toiling all the day for an unfeeling owner, who gives them but little victuals, steal sometimes a few moments from rest or refreshment to gather some small portion of grass, according as their time will admit [...] Nothing is more common than for the white people on this occasion to take the grass from them without paying for it; and not only so, but too often also, to my knowledge, our clerks, and many others, at the same time have committed acts of violence on the poor, wretched, and helpless females; whom I have seen for hours stand crying to no purpose, and get no redress or pay of any kind. Is not this one common and crying sin enough to bring down God's judgment on the islands? He tells us the oppressor and the oppressed are both in his hands; and if these are not the poor, the broken-

²⁵⁹ Cassius, ‘A Defence of the Slave Trade,’ letter in *The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany* (Edinburgh: 1785), 223.

hearted, the blind, the captive, the bruised, which our Saviour speaks of, who are they?²⁶⁰

Here, the narrating-‘I’ adopts the voice of a Christian preacher, agitating against the subjugation of fellow human beings in terms of sin, judgment and the Saviour of all oppressed peoples. Equiano frames the details of his sermon as figurative and representative of the mistreatment of all African slaves, generalizing this episode from ‘an instance or two of particular oppression out of many I have witnessed.’²⁶¹ The Christian third position, then, is itself double-voiced and speaks on behalf of two cultural collectivities —international communities of Christians, as well as all enslaved men, women and children.

Conclusion

The overarching thematic links between *Travels* and the *Interesting Narrative* centre on the ideas of membership, community and cultural difference. Both texts employ polyphony and a multi-voiced autobiographical voice as integrative narrative devices that challenge European assumptions on Indian and African identity. Locating themselves both within the British social order and as outsiders apart from it, the texts’ narrators are presented to readers as uniquely qualified cultural interlocutors between the two worlds they inhabit.

²⁶⁰ Equiano, 108.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

For Dean Mahomet, characterized by Dharwadker as ‘an irreducibly composite figure, different parts of whose life and personality seem to be constituted by rather different contextual determinants,’²⁶² *Travels* provides an opportunity to shift between cultural zones in a creative gesture of self-(re)definition. The authorial self in *Travels* organizes and prioritizes competing voices within the text while preserving their differences, allowing Mahomet to strategically reshape and refine his cultural position between Britain and India. This ambivalence re-frames *Travels* as a text as much concerned with accounting for Western culture and social behaviour as it is with India. His attempts to normalize Indian cultural practices for a European readership, through a narrative voice that frequently positions itself as British, counters conceptions of India found in contemporary travel literature. As Majeed suggests, Mahomet engages ‘familiar descriptive stereotypes, playing to his British audience’s expectations but often deconstructing the established negative associations of these stereotypes.’²⁶³

In combining travel writing with autobiography and memoir, Mahomet marries narrative function the detached cultural observer to the local cultural insider and interpreter; self in *Travels* serves as the vehicle for these voices, acting as an intercultural agent between India and the West. Even so, this conceit proves to be a carefully curated construction that deliberately attempts to inscribe itself within particular social contexts and distance itself from others — Fisher notes,

²⁶² Dharwadker, 200.

²⁶³ Majeed, 699.

His self-presentation of material from his past proved highly selective. He omitted many events and included others according to an agenda that would, he presumably hoped, demonstrate to his audience an identity of his own shaping.²⁶⁴

An examination of where and how Mahomet's culturally-distinct I-positions interact within *Travels* proves invaluable in evaluating how he shapes self and identity in his text. The various I-positions that emerge on careful reading of *Travels* reveal their strategic value in Mahomet's composition of the authorial self, where these positions are negotiated and unified. This mode of analysis is helpful in contextualizing his rendering of local cultural information and in theorizing how the narrating- and narrated-'I' in this form of life writing may themselves be culturally-inflected and multi-voiced.

Like Mahomet, Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* melds the familiar tropes of eighteenth-century autobiography with other forms of life writing, most prominently the slave narrative. Slave narratives' emphasis on emotive testimony and witnessing in their accounts of slave experience and religious fervour lend these texts a sense of thematic urgency — mobilized by Equiano to agitate for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Emerging from a historical context where many in the West held blacks and Africans to be something not-quite human, the *Interesting Narrative* forcefully argues that humanity is not conditioned on race or a person's colour of skin through a mode of intimate realism engendered by the autobiographical voice.

²⁶⁴ Michael Fisher, 'Representations of India, the English East India Company, and Self by an Eighteenth-Century Indian Emigrant to Britain,' *Modern Asian Studies* 32.4 (1998), 891-911 (p. 897).

Equiano strategically combines experience, witnessing and testimony with life writing as part of a literary framework that approaches its contemporary European readers on equal discursive footing; as Whitlock writes,

Equiano's tactical appeal to 'benevolence,' 'suffering,' and 'man' evokes an ethics of witnessing and sympathetic interestedness that became available for testimonial narrative in the late eighteenth century during the campaigns for abolition and emancipation.

Equiano uses the historical and ideological shaping of this narrating 'I' to speak as a human being.²⁶⁵

Equiano adopts a number of culturally-divergent I-positions within this system of representation in order to demonstrate how African, Briton and European share a common humanity. Importantly, the third position that draws these perspectives together is the voice of the earnest Christian — whereby Equiano establishes both spiritual and temporal continuity with his white audience.

Both Mahomet and Equiano employ the conceits of autobiography and life writing in order to express personal subjectivities of their own invention. Equally, both authors' movement between cultural spaces and cultivation of intercultural narrative voices interrogate European interpretations of race and identity. The interplay between these I-positions, self and intercultural encounter within *Travels* and *Interesting Narrative*, as well as the texts' borrowing, plagiarism and invention, are deliberate literary strategies that

²⁶⁵ Whitlock, 7.

direct readers towards a particular understanding of Mahomet and Equiano's lives and life stories. Unpacking the elements of self in their texts and examining how their relationships give form to this creative framework illustrates the complexity of these intratextual interactions — and the centrality of the multi-voiced self to both authors' creative endeavours.

Chapter 3: Importing Knowledge and Theory — The Authorial Self and the Expert Position in Henry Callaway's *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulu* (1868) and R. C. Temple's *Legends of the Punjab* (1884-1900)

*We know not yet what shall be the result of such collections of children's tales. Children's tales now; but not the invention of a child's intellect; nor all invented to gratify a child's fancy. If carefully studied and compared with corresponding legends among other people, they [...] force upon us the great truth, that man has everywhere thought alike [...] a stronger proof of essential unity [...] one in his mental qualities, tendencies, emotions, passions.*²⁶⁶

Henry Callaway, *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus*.

*Just as physiologists are enabled by a minute and exact examination of skulls or teeth or hair and so on to differentiate or connect the various races of mankind, so should Folklorists [...] be able to provide reliable data towards a true explanation of the reasons why particular peoples are mentally what they are found to be.*²⁶⁷

R.C. Temple, *Legends of the Punjab, Volume II*

My analysis of Mahomet and Equiano's autobiographical texts employed dialogic self theory's notion of the 'third position' in order to examine how oppositional narrative selves and I-positions are reconciled or unified within their texts. Like *Travels and Interesting Narrative*, Anglican missionary Henry Callaway's *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus* and Raj officer-cum-administrator R.C. Temple's *Legends of the Punjab* engage

²⁶⁶ Henry Callaway, 'Preface to the First Volume' in *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus*, 2.

²⁶⁷ R.C. Temple, *Legends of the Punjab* vol. II, viii.

issues of authority and representation, with each author claiming specialized knowledge of indigenous cultural practice. Curated nineteenth-century collections of South African and North Indian folktales in translation, *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* operate in a different generic space and require a different critical approach. Exploring the material plot or thematic substance of their translated stories, for instance, would not be particularly helpful in tracing how authorial self operates in these texts. Unlike in *Travels* or *Interesting Narrative*, where the idea of self is conspicuously at the heart of Mahomet and Equiano's creative endeavours, Callaway and Temple's folk anthologies obscure the self behind their authors' editorship.

Both Callaway and Temple attempt to conceal the authorial self in their texts through a purported commitment to recording local myths and legends as they were originally related to the authors or their assistants, with minimal editorial interference. 'The very value of such a work,' Callaway argues, 'depends on the fidelity with which all is told... I have had a trust committed to me... that I can only faithfully execute [by] laying every thing before others;'²⁶⁸ 'I have also endeavoured to show the instability of form that many words have by strictly adhering to what the man said in preference to what he ought to have said,'²⁶⁹ writes Temple. Despite their claims to scrupulously authentic representations of local folk stories, the authors' narrative strategies nevertheless belie the agency and creative decisions involved in their translations: 'the translation [...] will be found to be a true representation of the original [...] my object has been to give idiom for

²⁶⁸ Henry Callaway, 'Preface to the First Volume,' 2.

²⁶⁹ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xxv.

idiom rather than word for word,'²⁷⁰ advises Callaway; 'the surest way to solve a knotty point is to trust to strict philology and a literal translation of the words, never however neglecting the bard's traditional rendering if there be one,'²⁷¹ explains Temple. These kinds of editorial interventions build towards an understanding of how self operates in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* — through authorship and a sense of specialized expertise. As this chapter will illustrate, *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* voice self through two separate, but closely related, creative strategies — the authorial self and the 'expert' position.

Recalling dialogical self theory's idea of self as a multiplicity of positions in constant interaction and exchange with one another, both internally and externally, this chapter identifies and examines two aspects of the self in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* that arise through dialogic encounter within the texts. First, the authorial self in the texts' prefatory material and notes, in dialogue with its European readership and studentship. Second, the 'expert position' embedded within the structure of the texts, the interaction between authorial self and local voices — including assistants, secretaries, storytellers and bards — within the texts. Following brief biographies contextualizing the authors, and a critical overview of nineteenth-century folklore and its relationship to colonial knowledge production, the chapter's investigation and close-readings discuss their connections to these self-positions within Callaway and Temple's texts.

Henry Callaway (1817-1890) and *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus*

²⁷⁰ Callaway, ii.

²⁷¹ Temple, xi.

The eleventh child of a bootmaker-turned-tax collector and a farmer's daughter, Henry Callaway was born on January 17, 1817 in Lymington, Hampshire,²⁷² moving to Southampton and London with his family and five surviving siblings before settling in Crediton, Devon. At 16, Callaway joined a parish school in Heavitree, near Exeter, where he developed an interest in Quakerism under the guidance of the school's headmaster. Though he 'had no other view than that of becoming a minister of the Church of England,'²⁷³ Callaway endured a crisis of faith during this period — not wholly convinced of Anglican doctrine, indecisive over joining the Quaker Society of Friends. Moving to Wellington, Somerset, in 1835 to work as a private tutor, he eventually joined the Friends in 1837, relocating to Bridgwater the same year to begin work as a chemist in a Quaker dispensary. Callaway continued his medical training at London's St. Bartholomew's Hospital, joining the College of Surgeons in 1842 and opening a private practice. By 1852, poor health obliged him to quit London for the winter and seek refuge and restoration in the north of France — recuperating in Montpellier, Callaway's growing dissatisfaction with Quakerism came to a head:

I believed I was to minister to others, and with this prospect, to make myself acquainted with the real principles of the Gospel. *There* arose the first little cloud which obscured in my sight the purity of Quakerism. I was called to the work of the ministry, yet I was also . . . called upon to have a secular occupation. To my consciousness the two things were incompatible.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Benham, 1.

²⁷³ Benham, 3.

²⁷⁴ Henry Callaway in Benham, *Henry Callaway — A Memoir*, 26.

He left the Friends in the spring of 1853 and, on returning to London, rejoined the Church of England in December of the same year. With Callaway's health once again deteriorating on account of the damp English weather, and a mutual chill developing between him and his mostly Quaker social circle, he resolved to leave Britain and wrote to Bishop John Colenso, hoping to join his mission in Natal. Colenso consented and Callaway arrived in Durban in late 1854, eventually establishing his own mission station a few miles from Pietermaritzburg called Springvale in 1858. In 1873, Callaway travelled to Edinburgh to be consecrated as the first Bishop of St John's, a newly formed diocese near Clydesdale, in which capacity he served for thirteen years, until failing health compelled him to step down. He returned to England in 1887 and lived in Devon until his death in 1890.

Callaway's studies into the customs and practices of 'the Kaffirs' (a racial slur derived from the Arabic for 'disbeliever,' the term was employed by colonists to describe the native black populations across tribes and ethnic groups) emerges from a belief that 'the Kaffirs have degenerated from a much higher position intellectually and morally than they now hold,'²⁷⁵ and a conviction that the spiritual condition of natives might be improved through better understanding their ways of thinking of living as well as missionary education. Callaway initially began collecting local legends and folk stories as part of his own linguistic education in the Zulu language, later compiling, annotating, translating and interpreting this work in *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (1868), *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus* (1868), *Amatongo, Or, Ancestor Worship as Existing Among the Amazulu in Their Own Words with a Translation Into English and*

²⁷⁵ Henry Callaway, 'To Mr. Hanbury, December 16, 1858' in Benham, 76.

Notes (1869), *Some Remarks on the Zulu language* (1870) and *Izinyanga Zokubula, Or, Divination, as Existing Among the Amazulu* (1884), among other texts. His work in *Nursery Tales* is influenced by German philologist and linguist Wilhelm Bleek's research on South African languages²⁷⁶ — in particular his 1864 *Reynard the Fox in South Africa; or, Hottentot Fables and Tales*,²⁷⁷ where Bleek writes of the value folklore to 'the comparative philologist, and for any one who takes an interest in observing the working of the human mind in its most primitive stages.'²⁷⁸ As noted in his *British Medical Journal* obituary, one of Callaway's most significant contributions to ethnography lies in 'reducing the [Zulu] language to a written form,'²⁷⁹ upon which European comparative frameworks and theories could be overlaid.

David Chidester's extensive critical work on Callaway raises the point that his translations and interpretations in such texts as *Nursery Tales* and *The Religious System of the Amazulu* are indelibly marked by 'the local conditions of a specific colonial frontier,'²⁸⁰ the particular circumstances of his texts' composition. Callaway, Chidester writes, 'framed his research agenda in terms of what he saw as the needs of the Christian mission. In this

²⁷⁶ Bleek worked with Colenso in Natal in 1855; his essay 'On the Languages of Western and Southern Africa' was published in *Transactions of the Philological Society* the same year.

²⁷⁷ Wilhelm Bleek, *Reynard the Fox in South Africa; or, Hottentot Fables and Tales* (London: Trübner and Co., 1864).

²⁷⁸ Bleek, xxv-xxvi.

²⁷⁹ 'Obituary,' *The British Medical Journal* 1.1528 (April 12, 1890), 868-869 (869).

²⁸⁰ David Chidester, "Classify and Conquer": Friedrich Max Müller, Indigenous Religious Traditions, and Imperial Comparative Religion,' *Beyond Primitivism Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, ed. by Jacob K. Olupona (London: Routledge, 2004), 71-88 (p. 80-81).

regard, he conducted his research on Zulu religion in the context of a theological polemic against Bishop Colenso.²⁸¹

To the dismay of his colleagues in the mission, Colenso advocated tolerance towards Zulu polygamy, voiced opposition the principles of eternal damnation and substitutionary atonement, and, perhaps most shockingly, challenged the historicity of the Bible.²⁸²

Callaway rejected Colenso's theology²⁸³ and was suspicious of his Biblical translations —

To give one instance of the danger he dreaded: 'The Word *was made flesh*' was translated 'became a mere man' [...] Callaway ascertained, as he believed, that that Bishop had not made a mistake in the language, but had used the words as a distinct assertion of his own belief.²⁸⁴

Callaway also disagreed with Colenso's use of the Zulu supreme deity's name, *Unkulunkulu*, for 'God' in his translations, regarding it 'inappropriate for a frontier mission that had to

²⁸¹ Chidester, 81.

²⁸² Timothy Larsen notes Colenso's realization that the Bible contained historical inaccuracy 'reveal that the narrative is unreliable and prove that it is unhistorical. This realization frees us from having to embrace those passages that offend our sensibilities.' Timothy Larsen, 'Bishop Colenso and His Critics: The Strange Emergence of Biblical Criticism in Victorian Britain,' *The Eye of the Storm: Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Inspiration*, ed. by Jonathan A. Draper (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 42-63 (p. 48).

²⁸³ Through interaction with the Zulus and their culture, and a sympathetic attitude towards their social and political structures, Colenso's religious views began to align with relativist interpretations of theology and Scripture. For his troubles, he was accused of heresy and brought to trial before the Bishop of Cape Town, who deposed Colenso from his diocese and excommunicated him from the Church of England. Civil courts in Natal and England later vacated this judgment.

²⁸⁴ Marian S. Benham, *Henry Callaway, M.D., D.D., First Bishop for Kaffraria, His Life History and Work — A Memoir*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 115.

distinguish itself from a surrounding heathendom.'²⁸⁵ Instead, Callaway attempted to prove *Unkulunkulu*'s local etymologies indicated that the word referred to an 'original ancestor' or 'great-great-grandfather' — a rendering that would later pose problems for contemporary European cultural theorists. His revision of the word, Chidester writes, was tenuous:

Callaway collected evidence for this conclusion primarily from informants who had sought refuge at his mission station in Springvale [...] these informants were social outcasts or refugees [...] from different regions that ranged from the remote northern Zulu territory to the eastern Cape [...] Instead of holding a single, coherent Zulu religious system, Callaway's informants asserted a spectrum of religious positions that can be correlated with varying degrees of colonial contact. At least seven different religious positions can be distilled from the oral testimony Callaway collected.²⁸⁶

Callaway's objections to Colenso's religious positions and determination to provide a counterpoint to his translations shape his both his analysis and reading of Zulu cosmology. In *Nursery Tales*, he presents a defense of his systems of orthography and translation alongside an archive of first-hand cultural data in order to cultivate new interpretations of Zulu beliefs. Addressing a readership of European ethnographers, linguists, anthropologists and philologists, Callaway writes in its introduction,

²⁸⁵ Chidester, 81.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

[If] the result of my labours be to lead others to a deeper study of the Kafir language, and so to a deeper knowledge of the Kafir people; and by their own investigations to fill up the gaps which exist in many subjects here brought before them, I shall be satiated. If others will continue and perfect what I have begun, I shall not have begun in vain.²⁸⁷

R. C. Temple (1850-1931) and *Legends of the Punjab*

Born in Allahabad on October 15th 1850, the eldest son of a British colonial official, Richard Carnac Temple followed his father into service under the Crown in India, putting together a 33-year career in various military and administrative capacities. Educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he developed a keen interest in anthropology, Temple joined the British Army in 1871, aged 21, and was summarily transferred to India. He formally joined the Indian Army six years later, seeing action in Britain's 1878 Afghan Campaign, before being reassigned to Burma during 1885's Third Burmese War. After the war, Temple was assigned a series of posts within the regional bureaucracy, serving first as head of the colonial Rangoon Municipality between 1891 and 1894, then as Chief Commissioner to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 1895 until his retirement in 1904. On his death in March 1931, The Royal Geographical Society wrote, his passing 'is a serious loss to Oriental scholarship.'²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Callaway, vii.

²⁸⁸ 'Obituary: Sir Richard Carnac Temple, Bart., C.B., C.I.E.,' *The Geographic Journal* 77.6 (1931), 591.

Much of Temple's research into Oriental folklore during his time with the colonial service occurred between periods of conflict. His work on North Indian folktales in particular began in earnest in the years following the Afghan war, when he was posted to Punjab as Cantonment Magistrate. Compiled, translated and published over sixteen years spanning 1884 and 1900, Temple's three-volume *Legends of the Punjab* collects fifty-nine North Indian folktales and poems, presented both in translation and transliterated local languages and dialects.²⁸⁹ Representing precisely half of the 118 stories Temple had gathered by the turn of the century — the remainder only 'roughly prepared for publication' or entirely untranslated²⁹⁰ — the texts reflect a lifelong interest in bardic legends held by the career officer and civil servant. In addition to *Legends*, Temple collaborated with fellow folklorist Flora Annie Steel on a well-received children's treasury, 1884's *Wide-Awake Stories: A Collection of Tales Told By Little Children, Between Sunset and Sunrise, In the Punjab and Kashmir*; served as editor-proprietor of *Indian Antiquary*, a journal dedicated to the promotion of Indian research; was a frequent contributor to *The Folk-Lore Journal*; and was a respected speaker and essayist on the Orient and Oriental experience in Britain and abroad.

The myths and legends in Temple's text emerge from a dedicated effort to gather as much local cultural data as possible — accounting for the wide variety of songs and stories included over *Legends'* three volumes. Indeed, many of the stories recorded in his texts have been lost over the twentieth century. Some modern collections of Punjabi-language folk collections even acknowledge Temple as a primary source with the inscription '*Havālā*

²⁸⁹ Principally Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi.

²⁹⁰ Temple, *Legends* vol. III, vi.

Temple' ('attributed to Temple') — marking a century-long journey from rough native dialect to Persian, to Romanized vernacular, to colonial English, to simplified Punjabi Gurmukhi script.

Issues of authenticity, reliability and credibility in a still-informal field of research likely contribute to Temple's insistence on distinguishing himself from amateur folk hobbyists and enthusiasts. He stresses that *Legends* represents a scholarly work, incorporating an ambitious taxonomy of Punjabi folk idiom that far exceeds the scope of other collections, particularly children's editions.²⁹¹ In his preface to *Legends'* second volume, Temple differentiates between his own contributions to folkloristics, or folklore studies, and the efforts of dabblers —

The serious study of Folklore is a new matter, and at the commencement of all such there are always to be found a certain number of *dilettanti*, who will take up a subject as long as it is light [...] and capable of rewarding them with an easily acquired reputation for learning, to drop it the moment others better equipped for the work make it deep enough to be troublesome [...] It behooves the collector to be careful as to what he puts into his store, lest critics point out that he is accumulating rubbish.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Steel's popular *Tales of the Punjab*, for instance, opens with an introductory address to 'The Little Reader' — 'Would you like to know how these stories are told? Come with me, and you shall see. There! take my hand and do not be afraid, for Prince Hassan's carpet is beneath your feet. So now! — 'Hey presto! Abracadabra!' Here we are in a Punjabi village. Flora Annie Steel, *Tales of the Punjab* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), xi.

²⁹² Temple, *Legends* vol. II, vii.

Temple contrasts the image of the dilettante to the ‘man of science’²⁹³ who, through critical resourcefulness and scholarly acumen, assembles his collections systematically rather than publishing an indiscriminate hodgepodge of local stories. Extracting cultural meaning and value from these stories, he suggests relies on scientific systems of ordering and classification.

As with other ‘scientific’ surveys of North Indian folklore by such figures as Charles Swynerton,²⁹⁴ James Hinton Knowles,²⁹⁵ William Crooke²⁹⁶ and E.M. Gordon,²⁹⁷ Temple’s collection reflects the Western cultural discourses and values within which it is constructed. *Legends’* stories are collected, organized and analyzed under European conceptions of theme, type, genre and classification; in its capacity as a cultural sourcebook, the text appeals to European critical sensibilities and systems of interpretation. Farina Mir notes in *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* that Temple’s project ‘ultimately, was one of colonial assimilation: colonial in its insistence on the prevalence — indeed, singularity — of a European

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ *The Adventures of the Panjáb hero Rájá Rasálu, and Other Folk-Tales of the Panjáb* (Calcutta: W. Newman & Co., 1884); *Indian Nights’ Entertainment or, Folk Tales from the Upper Indus* (London: Elliot Stock, 1892). *Romantic Tales from the Panjab* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1903)

²⁹⁵ *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs & Sayings, Explained and Illustrated from the Rich and Interesting Folklore of the Valley* (1885), *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* (1888).

²⁹⁶ *An Ethnographic Handbook for the North-west Provinces and Oudh* (1890), *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (revised, expanded and reprinted in two volumes between 1894 and 1896), *The North-Western Provinces of India: Their History, Ethnology, and Administration* (1897),

²⁹⁷ *Indian Folk Tales: Being Side-Lights on Village Life in Bilaspore, Central Provinces* (1908)

epistemological framework.’²⁹⁸ Sadhana Naithani adopts a similar position in her essay, ‘Prefaced Space: Tales of the Colonial British Collectors of Indian Folklore’ —

The British folklore collectors of colonial India not only continued to fuel the imaginings of India but also defined the pattern of research into Indian folk-lore: folklore material was collected in India on European theoretical models, and scholarship on these was generated and advanced in Europe.²⁹⁹

Beyond brief remarks on local provenance and historicity, nowhere in *Legends* are readers invited to consider local North Indian perspectives on the songs and stories. Instead, the text attempts to make foreign cultural practice intelligible to Europeans within European frameworks of ethnology, philology and anthropology, as interpreted by Europeans.

Temple frames *Legends*’ translated stories, poems and songs as part of a broader investigation into the ethnographic and anthropological implications of North Indian folklore, which to him represent a ‘true reflex of popular notions.’³⁰⁰ The folklorist conducts this investigation, while the native is the purpose and object of study —

These Legends, if explored, will decisively and instructively show the value of studying them in detail to those who would dig down to the roots of folklore anywhere in the world, and would learn something of the thoughts of the folk and of the trains of reasoning, which give form to the many apparently incomprehensible

²⁹⁸ Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 103.

²⁹⁹ Sadhana Naithani, ‘Prefaced Space: Tales of the Colonial British Collectors of Indian Folklore,’ *Imagined States Nationalism, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001), 64-79 (p. 76).

³⁰⁰ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, v.

and unreasonable actions observable in the everyday life of the peasantry everywhere.³⁰¹

Balanced against the nineteenth-century folklorist's interest in historical and philological considerations is the view of colonial administrator, who argues that 'the practices and beliefs [...] of Folk-lore make up the daily life of the natives. [We] cannot hope to understand them rightly unless we deeply study them.'³⁰² Understanding the customs and beliefs of natives, Temple continues, 'begets sympathy, and sympathy begets good government.'³⁰³

Nineteenth-Century Folklore Studies

Although the idea of folklore studies as a *bona fide* academic endeavour emerges in Europe during Callaway and Temple's lifetimes in the nineteenth century, its intellectual roots reach into seventeenth and eighteenth century interest in 'popular antiquities,' or local legends, rituals and beliefs. Englishman John Brand's 1777 *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, for instance, introduces his collection of British superstitions³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Temple, *Legends* vol. III, lxviii.

³⁰² R.C. Temple, 'The Science of Folk-Lore,' *The Folk-Lore Journal* 4.3 (1886), 193-212 (p. 209).

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Brand draws from and expands on Henry Bourne's 1725 *Antiquities of the Common People*. Included in the 33 traditions described in this volume are treatises on why church bells are rung on the occasion of a person's death, why flowers are placed on a grave, why Palm Sunday is named thus and why the observance of May-Day rituals contributes to 'much wickedness and debauchery [...] to the scandal of whole families, and the dishonour of religion.' John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (London: J. Johnson, 1777), 257.

as ‘a few of the vast number of ceremonies and opinions, which are held by the common people’³⁰⁵ and outlines his desire to ‘trace backwards, as far as possible [...] the distant countries from whence they were first perceived to [emerge].’³⁰⁶ This notion of cultivating an understanding of nations and their peoples through an analysis of the myths and legends that give rise to their customs was immeasurably advanced by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s early nineteenth-century collections of German legends and folk stories.³⁰⁷ The Grimms incorporate philology and ethnography³⁰⁸ in their work as part of a broader project attempting to articulate a German national mythology, to ‘understand the nature of the German nation, its origins and national psyche.’³⁰⁹ Their innovations in these fields, including contributions to the comparative method of language development,³¹⁰ would

³⁰⁵ Brand, ‘The Preface’ in *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, xvi.

³⁰⁶ Brand, ‘General Preface’ in *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, iv.

³⁰⁷ Including *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (‘Children’s and Household Tales,’ better known as *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*) published in three volumes in 1812, 1815 and 1822, and *Deutsche Sagen* or German Sagas published in two volumes in 1816 and 1818.

³⁰⁸ Jack Zipes notes that even before the Grimms began collecting folktales for publication in 1806, they had ‘begun gathering all kinds of sagas, epics, legends, songs, and manuscripts and were writing about their historical significance.’ Jack Zipes, ‘Two Hundred Years After Once Upon a Time: The Legacy of the Brothers Grimm and Their Tales in Germany,’ *Marvels & Tales* 28.1 (2014) 54-74 (p. 65.)

³⁰⁹ Joep Leerssen, ‘Notes Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism,’ *Romantik: Journal for the Study of Romanticisms* 2.1 (2013), 9-35 (p. 21.)

³¹⁰ In linguistics, the comparative method refers to the study of an ancestral language, or a common proto-language, through an analysis of languages descended or derived from it. The idea of proto-language was introduced by William Jones in the late-eighteenth century — in a 1786 address to the Asiatic Society in Kolkata, Jones observed that the linguistic similarities between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin suggest a common linguistic source, further speculating that ‘both the Gothick and the Celtick, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanscrit.’ (William Jones, ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse, on the Hindus delivered to the Asiatic Society, 2 February 1786,’ *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. by Michael J. Franklin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), 355-370 (p. 357.)) Physician Thomas Young first described this family of languages ‘Indo-European’ in 1813. The second edition of Jacob Grimm’s *Deutsche Grammatik* (German Grammar) published in 1822, outlined corresponding sound shifts in Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic not found in Greek or Latin — establishing a link

prove foundational to the formation and recognition of folklore studies. Jacob, to whom ‘fairytales, sagas and legend, indeed all collective-oral culture, constituted a window on archaic mythology and the early stages of national development,’³¹¹ is cited in English antiquarian William John Thoms’ 1846 column for the London literary magazine *The Athenæum*, where he first introduces the term ‘folk-lore.’ Thoms writes,

Your pages have so often given evidence of the interest which you take we in England designate as Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-bye it is more a Lore than a Literature, and would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folk-Lore,—the *Lore of the People*) [...] the *Athenæum* [should] gather together the infinite number of minute facts [...] scattered over the memories of its thousands of readers, and preserve them in its pages, until some James Grimm shall arise who shall do for the Mythology of the British Islands the good service which that profound antiquary and philologist has accomplished for the Mythology of Germany.³¹²

Modelling his conception of folkloric endeavour on the Grimms’ efforts, Thoms’ appeals for further research in British ‘folk-lore’ are rooted in a cultural argument calling for unifying national discourses ‘from the north and from the south — from John o’ Groat’s to the Land’s

between Germanic languages, including English, and their Indo-European antecedents, as well as marking their divergence from classical and Romance languages. Referred to as Grimm’s Law, Grimm’s discovery helped to formally establish the scholarly fields of historical linguistics and comparative phonology.

³¹¹ Joep Leerssen, ‘Oral Epic: The Nation Finds a Voice’ in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11-26 (p. 17.)

³¹² William John Thoms, ‘Folk-Lore,’ from ‘The Athenæum,’ August 22, 1846,’ *Journal of Folklore Research* 33.3 (1996), 187–189 (p. 187.)

End!’³¹³ As historian Timothy Baycroft observes, nineteenth-century interest in folklore coincides with a rising tide of nationalism across Europe,³¹⁴ noting,

Folklore often constituted one of the key elements of national identities, a distinguishing feature of a group of people which could be identified as a nation through their folkloric cultural practices [...] The identification of which groups constituted a people had enormous political ramifications, giving folklore enormous potential to be instrumentalized at the highest political level as a legitimizing discourse. Not every nation put folkloric representations at the very centre of its national identity, but they all included some elements of what we can call folklore, and many did have folklore at the very heart of their national discourse.’³¹⁵

The utility of folklore as a ‘legitimizing discourse’ to these nationalist movements rests in its claim to the authentic representation of peoples and cultures. This sense of authenticity and the authentic is crucial to the ‘legitimacy derived from association with ‘true’ people identified through folk culture,’³¹⁶ and in differentiating these ‘true people’ from outsiders and others.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ For instance, the 1848 uprisings in the Italian states, France, Hungary, Poland and others; the Fenian Rising in 1867; the final unification of Italy in 1871 and of Germany the same year; the 1878 Treaty of Berlin recognizing the independence of Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria.

³¹⁵ Timothy Baycroft, ‘Introduction’ in *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Timothy Baycroft and David Hopkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1-11 (p. 1-2.)

³¹⁶ Baycroft, 5.

As with the nationalist orientation of folklore studies in Europe, colonial folkloristics concentrates on defining culture and cultural practice — and in advancing new theories on the origins of European societies through comparative analysis between foreign and Western myth and legend. Many of these colonial researchers, including Callaway and Temple, engage contemporary scholarship in such fields as linguistics, religion and mythology in an effort to either support or formulate global-local theories of language and culture. Critical frameworks of authenticity and the authentic are often threaded through their texts in order to lend their work legitimacy and a sense of discursive authority.

Colonial Folklorists and Authenticity

To colonial folklore collectors, authenticity represents both a methodology and an objective. Colonial folklorists invoke two intertwining strands of authenticity in their work and research — the textual authenticity of folk collections, a commitment to rigorous and transparent methodology affirming their rendering of these stories is accurate and authoritative; and the idea that folklore itself represents an authenticity of cultural experience, the rawest and most primitive communal mythologies accounting for why peoples and cultures are how they are. Many folk anthologies emerging from British colonies and territories over the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries address these rationales directly in their authors' notes, prefaces and introductions. The following extracts, from E.M. Gordon's *Indian Folk Tales: Being Side-Lights on Village Life in Bilaspore, Central Provinces*, James Hinton Knowles' *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* and William Crooke's *An*

Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India reiterate these twin threads of folkloric authenticity —

During a residence of sixteen years, after acquiring the dialect of the people, I have gathered, at first hand, the material which is now made public. It is generally found that most of the primitive peoples are exceedingly reticent as to their beliefs and practices. In order to gain anything like an accurate understanding of their most inward thoughts it is necessary to reside amongst them for a long while, and watch them when they do not know that they are under observation.³¹⁷

In nearly every case [...] the name and address of the narrator have been given [...] all classes of people have contributed to this collection — the officiating governor, the poor farmer, the learned Pandit, the ignorant Musalman, the physician, the barber, the day-labourer, the old man grey-headed, and the dirty little boy, all [...] entirely free from European influence [...] I sincerely hope [to] clear away the clouds that envelop much of the practices, ideas, and beliefs which make up the daily life of the natives [...] control their feelings, and underlie many of their actions.³¹⁸

I desired to collect [...] information on the beliefs of the people which will enable [British officers] to understand the mysterious inner life of the races among whom their lot is cast; [...] I hope that European scholars may find in these pages some

³¹⁷ E.M. Gordon, *Indian Folk Tales: Being Side-Lights on Village Life in Bilaspore, Central Provinces* (London: Elliot Stock, 1908), vii.

³¹⁸ James Hinton Knowles, *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* (London: Trübner & Co., 1888), ix.

fresh examples of familiar principles [...] Even at the risk of overloading the notes with references, I have quoted the authorities which I have used.³¹⁹

Gordon, Knowles and Crooke follow a similar formula in asserting the authenticity of their work — detailing their sources, providing references where applicable and highlighting the unique local insight provided by their texts. In framing their collections as authentic, these researchers claim an ‘access to ‘the real,’³²⁰ privileged knowledge of other peoples’ material cultural realities.

Colonial folklorists’ emphasis on textual authenticity and the authentic is closely linked to their relationship with contemporary European cultural researchers. As suggested by Crooke’s acknowledgement of ‘European scholars,’ colonial interest in indigenous folktales coincides with scholarly interest in comparative methodologies advanced by such figures as Oxford-based German Orientalist Friedrich Max Müller. Folklore collectors documented and recorded local bodies of knowledge for the benefit of researchers like Müller, who would in turn apply interpretive frameworks to this cultural data in an effort to cultivate new understandings of both European and colonial peoples — Müller, for instance, argues that the study of colonial myths and legends might shed light on the origins of European civilizations. The importance of authentic source material, unaltered and ‘entirely free from European influence’ was viewed as crucial to this

³¹⁹ William Crooke, *An Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1894), i.

³²⁰ Luisa Del Giudice and Gerald Porter, Introduction to *Imagined States Nationalism, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures*, *Imagined States Nationalism, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures*, ed. by Luisa Del Giudice and Gerald Porter (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001), 1-7 (p. 3).

collaborative endeavour, with academic credibility in the balance. In his preface to the first volume of *Legends*, Temple acknowledges these anxieties and assures readers of his work's legitimacy:

It is frequently urged that the reader has too often to trust his author in original works on folklore in matters requiring accuracy. One reads a racy translation, but who knows if it is correct, or how much of himself the author has imported into his text? How often one sees complaints in reviews of a particular folklore work that it is suspiciously free in its renderings? To avoid this reproach at any cost I have given in nearly all the *Legends* both text and rendering, so that exports can see for themselves how far my translations are accurate, and those that have to take them on trust can go to experts for help in this respect if they think they require it.³²¹

The second aspect of authenticity, folklore as authentic cultural expression and experience, is rooted in the idea that local stories, myths and legends reveal fundamental truths about a people and their customs. In an 1886 lecture transcribed for *The Folk-Lore Journal's* 'The Science of Folk-Lore' column, Temple describes folk stories as the embodiment of 'the popular ideas on all matters connected with man and his surroundings [...] the instinct of man to account for the facts that he observes round about him.'³²² To colonial folklorists like Callaway and Temple, illuminating the 'popular ideas' of indigenous peoples is key to understanding their behaviours, cultures and beliefs.

³²¹ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xxv.

³²² Temple, 'The Science of Folk-Lore,' 195.

In constructing a body of knowledge describing these peoples' myths, legends and cosmologies, they could then employ this specialized information to advance their own theories on the spiritual development of natives, as with Callaway, or in aid of 'good government,' as with Temple.

In her introduction to *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Regina Bendix writes,

Authenticity in ever-changing guises became at once the goal and cement of cultural knowledge — the origin and essence of being human [...] Fields such as ethnology and anthropology, philology, and disciplines devoted to national literatures and cultural histories emerged and evolved concurrently with political and economic interests in cultural, ethnic, and racial traits, occasioned by Western exploration, by the encounter with heretofore unknown peoples, and by the subsequent desire to colonize them. The rhetoric of authenticity permeated and at times intertwined disciplinary and political constructions.³²³

The disciplinary-political praxis described by Bendix — the overlap between scholarly concerns in fields like ethnology and philology and social-political issues of mission work and colonial governance — aligns with colonial folk collectors' interests in two significant ways. First, their placement in the colonies positions them as field researchers for British

³²³ Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 6.

and European cultural scientists like Müller, Edward Clodd,³²⁴ E.B. Tylor,³²⁵ and Andrew Lang,³²⁶ and their folk collections, as Callaway writes, are ‘full of interest to the missionary, the philologist, the ethnologist, and antiquarian.’³²⁷ Temple forcefully asserts the value of primary research over second- or third-hand accounts of indigenous cultures and practice, citing his own translations as sound and authentic models for intercultural interpretation:

If once the student of Indian religions, as practised, properly understands the full significance of such a production as the Marriage of Sakhi Sarwar, he will have learnt more than volumes of lucubrations by scholars in Europe can teach him, when based, as they often are, upon researches into the glorified imaginings of philosophic recluses and self-interested priests.³²⁸

Second, missionaries like Callaway and colonial administrators like Temple did not treat folklore as art, but rather as a cultural resource for study and examination which might be of some use to them in their official duties.³²⁹ Callaway’s *Nursery Tales*, for instance, begins

³²⁴ *The Childhood of the World* (1872), *The Childhood of Religion* (1875), *Tom Tit Tot; An Essay on Savage Philosophy in Folk-Tale* (1898); later Folk-Lore Society president, Clodd writes in *The Childhood of Religion*, ‘many of our folk-tales were invented in the story-loving East [...] and imported into Europe by pilgrims, students, merchants and warriors, whose several avocations were the means of intimately connecting East and West together.’ Edward Clodd, *The Childhood of Religion: Embracing a Single Account of the Birth and Growth of Myths and Legends* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1875), 262.

³²⁵ *Researches Into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865), *Primitive Culture* (1871), *Primitive Man* (with Louis Figuier, 1876), *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (1881).

³²⁶ *Custom and Myth* (1884), *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (1887).

³²⁷ Callaway, ii.

³²⁸ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xxvi.

³²⁹ Temple concludes his introduction to *Legends* second volume with assurances that his interest in collecting folk stories has not detracted from his professional life — ‘I may add that my official work during the past year in no way diminished’ (xxii). Zak Leonard notes this kind of research was usually the collector’s own initiative — ‘As emerging disciplines

as a twofold language project for its author, undertaking to collect and translate local stories in order to improve his understanding of the Zulu language and to teach locals to read in English:

At a very early period I began to write at the dictation of Zulu natives, as one means of gaining an accurate knowledge of words and idioms.³³⁰

[*Nursery Tales*] will form a book, too, which the young Kafir will greedily read, whilst he pores, not without loathing, over translations which he understands with difficulty, which relate to subjects that are new and strange to him, and which he does not readily comprehend; to which, it may be, he has a repugnance. [...] We want to teach the young Kafirs to read. We must, then, give them some inducement to read; and where can we find a greater than by giving them the traditionary tales of their forefathers, in the same words as they have heard them around their hut-fires?³³¹

The 'rhetoric of authenticity' inheres within Callaway's account of his methods and motivations in these introductory passages. His knowledge of Zulu is derived from first-hand interaction with locals, at the 'dictation of natives,' not Zulu-speaking mission

in the mid-Victorian period, anthropology, ethnography, and folklore studies were generally under the purview of the amateur London-based societies rather than any formal academic institutions. And despite the gradual legitimization of these fields, the British government was notoriously loath to fund such specialist endeavours.' Zak Leonard, 'Colonial Ethnography on India's North-West Frontier 1850-1910,' *The Historical Journal* 59.1 (2016), 175-196 (p. 187).

³³⁰ Callaway, i.

³³¹ Callaway, 1.

colleagues or other European settlers and colonists.³³² His text employs ‘the same words’ as traditional oral recitations of Zulu stories and legends, to an extent where they are instantly familiar and recognizable to young indigenous students and readers.

In this sense, the idea of authenticity in colonial folklore collections relates to extracting meaning from their assembled stories and constructing bodies of knowledge. Like Mahomet and Equiano, Callaway and Temple are engaged in the production of knowledge, their folk anthologies providing ‘reliable data towards a true explanation of the reasons why particular peoples are mentally what they are found to be’³³³ and an ‘exposition of the native mind.’³³⁴ The following section discusses the relationship between folklore and knowledge production, exploring the ways in which *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* operate as knowledge projects and the collaborative aspects of this endeavour.

Colonial Folklore and Knowledge

Production of knowledge in colonial folk collections may be characterized as both transactional and international. Transactional insofar as these texts form part of an international, intercultural, exchange between the West and colony; collectors negotiate and extract indigenous forms of knowledge and expression from local sources and transmit this data back to the colonial centre, whereupon critiques of this knowledge are filtered

³³² As Rajend Mesthrie notes, ‘the use of English in Natal dates back to the 1820s,’ when European explorers and traders first began to settle in the area. Rajend Mesthrie, *English in Language Shift: The History, Structure and Sociolinguistics of South African Indian English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

³³³ Temple, *Legends* vol. II, viii.

³³⁴ Callaway, ii.

back to colony. This activity is simultaneously international because these intercultural transactions between natives, colonial collectors and European readers circulate through global networks. Folklorists like Callaway and Temple did not publish for local audiences or colleagues, but to a diverse international constituency of students, amateur folk enthusiasts, intellectuals and scholars, among others. Given these intercultural matrices of assembly, dissemination and interpretation, the production of knowledge and meaning from and within colonial folk texts must be considered global and collaborative. This section discusses two aspects of this relationship, 1) between colonial folkloristics and European scholarship, and 2) colonial folklorist and bodies of colonial knowledge.

Both Callaway and Temple affirm that their work forms part of a broader collaborative project with European historians, philologists and ethnologists attempting to advance holistic theories on the histories of peoples, religions and cultures. As mentioned earlier, *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* provide these scholars the raw cultural material their comparative methodologies and analysis require. Callaway's stories and myths of the Zulu peoples, for instance, are key to Müller's ideas on religion, as acknowledged in his 1873 *Introduction to the Science of Religion*:

Let us hear the account which the Rev. Dr. Callaway gives of the fundamental religious notions which he, after a long residence among the various clans of the Zulus, after acquiring an intimate knowledge of their language, and, what is still

more important, after gaining their confidence, was able to extract from their old men and women.³³⁵

Callaway's work was instrumental in the development of Müller's theory on the origin of religions and religious belief, described in a contemporary *Spectator* review as an attempt to 'establish the possibility of dealing scientifically with the religious experiences of the human race.'³³⁶ Philologists like Müller relied on colonial middlemen like Callaway and Wilhelm Bleek in order to legitimize and validate their scholarship — even slight errors could irreparably damage their hypotheses and reputation. As David Chidester characterizes this relationship, field correspondents like Callaway and Bleek

made it possible for Max Müller to fashion a global science of religion that included indigenous religious traditions. At the same time, however, because they incorporated local colonial conflicts and contradictions into their research findings, Bleek and Callaway provided extremely unstable foundations for global theory building.³³⁷

³³⁵ Friedrich Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1882), 44.

³³⁶ The anonymous reviewer continues, 'We shall, if we are able to trace back the order and development of man's religious instincts, be able to reconstruct the history of the human race. As philological researches have shown that there are three great stems from which the infinite variety of languages is derived, and we are warranted in tracing the three to one common root, it will be found to be the same with Religion.' Max Müller on the Science of Religion,' *The Spectator*, 8 November 1873, 19)

³³⁷ David Chidester, "Classify and Conquer': Friedrich Max Müller, Indigenous Religious Traditions, and Imperial Comparative Religion,' *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*, ed. by Jacob K. Olupona (London: Routledge, 2004), 71-88 (p. 83).

For instance, Callaway's rendering of the Zulu deity *Unkulunkulu* as the common ancestor or 'great-great grandfather'³³⁸ of the Zulu peoples instead of the supreme creator of life in his 1870 *The Religious System of the Amazulu* caused Müller, who had seized on the notion of ancestry in *The Science of Religion* to draw parallels to similar histories of cultural lineage in Europe, much consternation.³³⁹

In addition to their contributions to European cultural theory, colonial folklorists attempt to construct bodies of knowledge around the local cultures from which their stories and legends are derived. As Naithani writes in *The Story-Time of the British Empire*, 'an important part of colonial folklore theory was sketching out the cultural life of the colonized subject for the knowledge and information of the middle-class readers back at home.'³⁴⁰ Fragments of local cultural histories are cobbled together in texts like *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* in order to make indigenous cultures knowable to western readers. Callaway's rendering of 'religious innovations, arguments and contradictions'³⁴¹ within Zulu religion, for instance, are synthesized within his texts as 'religious system.'³⁴² To European audiences, folk collections represented a window into the lives, natures and

³³⁸ Müller, 44.

³³⁹ Chidester further notes that Müller accused Callaway in 1897 of 'becoming 'bogged in a philological mess,' writing that "our Zulu informant' presented a threat to Max Müller's entire theoretical enterprise, which was built on the 'boggy foundations' of evidence from colonial experts such as Henry Callaway. 'If we can no longer quote Callaway on Zulus,' Max Müller bemoaned, 'whom shall we quote?' David Chidester, 'Thinking Black Circulations of Africana Religion in Imperial Comparative Religion,' *Journal of Africana Religions* 1.1 (2013), 1-27 (p. 4).

³⁴⁰ Sadhana Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire: Colonial and Postcolonial Folkloristics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 4-5.

³⁴¹ David Chidester, 'Primitive Texts, Savage Contexts: Contextualizing the Study of Religion in Colonial Situations,' *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 15.3 (2003), 272-283 (p. 275).

³⁴² Ibid.

cosmologies of different and remote peoples. In colonial contexts, these anthologies reflect empire's knowledge of itself:

The identity of the Empire lay in the knowledge about the Empire and in the articulation of this knowledge [...] 'Knowledge about natives' constituted a subject which was of general and scholarly interest. The whole Empire could be made into a comprehensible entity for the common people only by sketching out its various parts.³⁴³

These contributions to the 'identity' of empire and 'knowledge of natives,' are collaborative, transactional and culturally co-constitutive rather than matters of discursive imbalance between imperial rulers and subjects. Through a critical series of transactions, a native storyteller's rendition of popular folk legends becomes part of the folk collector's knowledge of his people, which itself becomes part of a broader European understanding of native cultures. The last stage of this exchange is where colonial knowledge may be instrumentalized as colonial policy towards natives.

Naithani registers an important distinction between folk scholarship within Europe and research conducted in the colonies over this period: national mythologies recorded on the continent precede the founding of a nation-state, while those erected by colonial folklorists follow the establishment of a colonial state.³⁴⁴ While nineteenth-century European folk projects inscribe a people into a nation, building towards a unified national

³⁴³ Naithani, 6.

³⁴⁴ 18.

mythos through shared ‘folkloric cultural practices,’³⁴⁵ colonial folkloristics engage a people who have already been made a nation through the institution and imposition of colonial governance. In this sense, while European folkloristics is concerned with the expression of culture — who is speaking, what are they saying, what is being said — colonial folk practitioners are involved in the representation of a people’s culture — this is who is speaking, this is what they are saying, this is what is being said.

Temple’s account of North Indian ‘scavenger castes’³⁴⁶ in *Legends*, for instance, first describes their veneration of local saints then proceeds to interpret and assign value to this practice. In ‘The Genealogies of Lâl Beg,’ he characterizes this spiritual system as ‘hagiolatry pure and simple,’ derived from a dedication to personalities rather than ideas —

Followers of Lâl Beg [...] have a religion of their own, neither Hindu nor Musalmân, but with a priesthood and a ritual peculiar to itself. This religion [...] consists merely of a confused veneration for anything and everything its followers, or rather their teachers, may have found to be considered sacred by their neighbours, whatever be its origin. Thus we find in the Panjâb that in the religion of the scavenger castes the tenets of the Hindus, the Musalmâns and the Sikhs are thrown together in the most hopeless confusion, and that the monotheism taught by the mediaeval reformers underlies all their superstitions.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Baycroft, 1.

³⁴⁶ Dalits; tasked with the manual removal of sewage and human waste.

³⁴⁷ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, 529.

By the second volume, Temple crafts this account of low-caste spiritualism into a generalized theory on the nature of Indian peasant religiosity:

I have long had a favorite theory that the average villager one meets in the Panjâb and Northern India is at heart neither a Muhammadan, nor a Hindu, nor a Sikh, nor of any other Religion, as such is understood by its orthodox — or to speak more correctly authorized — exponents, but that his 'Religion' is a confused unthinking worship of things held to be holy, whether men or places; in fact Hagiolatry.³⁴⁸

These observations on the religious beliefs of the 'average villager' emerge from a three-part process of knowledge production. First, the recording of local myth and legend; second, the examination of the legend in context of local cultural practice; third, extrapolating general conclusions on the national or regional character from this knowledge. In this passage, Temple overrides Muslim, Hindu and Sikh identities and subjectivities in order to propose what he considers a more useful interpretation of North Indian belief systems or 'general Indian belief.'³⁴⁹

Both Temple and Callaway approach the idea of intercultural encounter in colonial folkloristics through editorial intervention while simultaneously attempting to characterize their texts as neutral and balanced. On the one hand, Callaway writes 'it was clearly no part of the work of the collector to make any change in the language with a view of reducing it to one imagined standard of purity'³⁵⁰ while at the same time remarking that the language of

³⁴⁸ Temple, *Legends* vol. II, xxi.

³⁴⁹ 414.

³⁵⁰ Callaway, i.

‘uncultivated people’³⁵¹ is incompatible with ‘our own more refined taste.’³⁵² Balance and neutrality in folk collections like *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* is extended to the expression of local folk stories in their texts — the linguistic processes and strategies that Callaway and Temple engage in their translations — but not to the representation of the colonial subject and subjectivities.

Knowledge and representation raise issues of identity and subjectivity in texts like *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*. Though both the root and object of this research, the colonial subject does not appear in Callaway and Temple’s texts — written about, but without actual self-representation in the texts. Rather, the ‘we’ of a European readership engages with ‘them,’ ‘the natives’ and ‘these people’ from a distance; colonial folklorists like Callaway and Temple speak for local voices rather than through them. In this sense, the authors’ expertise and authority, their ability to critically engage and interpret the texts’ local cultural material, is defined against an absent voice, or other. As Hermans and Gieser note, expanding on philosopher and psychologist William James’ observations in *The Principles of Psychology*, the Other ‘is considered as ‘mine,’ which can be appropriated or possessed, but not as a ‘you’ that can be addressed. The other is approached on the object level but not the subject level.’³⁵³ The colonial subject is something beheld, an object of research rather than a figure articulating its own perspectives and values.

³⁵¹ ii.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Hermans and Gieser, ‘Introductory Chapter: History, Main Tenets and Core Concepts of Dialogical Self Theory’ in *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1-22 (p. 7).

Colonial knowledge production and representation, as well as the application of this knowledge within European scholarship, returns to the idea of narrative authority in colonial folkloristics. The following section examines the literary strategies employed by Callaway and Temple in order to position themselves as experts in their fields and authorities on the local cultures within which they operate.

Nursery Tales and Legends: Authorial Self and the Expert Position

In Temple and Callaway's texts, the idea of self is the key literary device by which these contributions to colonial knowledge are transmitted. The authorial self asserted in *Nursery Tales and Legends*' prefaces, notes and commentary lends their collections of diverse cultural data a stated purpose, pedagogical direction and administers editorial interpretation. Self frames the parameters of both authors' inquiries and attempts to guide readers' expectations and understanding of the material. Callaway writes that his collection will help scholars trace 'unsuspected points of contact between the Zulu and other people [...] and may even give us a clue to their origin,'³⁵⁴ and hopes that it will grant Zulu peoples 'a claim to be reckoned as an integral part of our common humanity, by showing that they have so many thoughts in common with other men, and have retained in their traditional tales so much that resembles the traditional tales of other people.'³⁵⁵ Similarly, Temple

³⁵⁴ Callaway, 1.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

argues that ‘it is really by a careful study of [folklore] that we can hope to grasp the religious and superstitious ideas that dominate the bulk of the Indian populations.’³⁵⁶

In this sense, they adopt an I-position similar to what sociologists Renata Zurawska-Zyla, Elzbieta Chmielnicka-Kuter and Piotr K. Oles describe in their essay ‘Spatial Organization of the Dialogical Self in Creative Writers’ as the ‘expert.’³⁵⁷ In their account, the expert position is monologic, characterized by a distance between self and subject being written about, ‘preferring a single dominant voice [to] control [...] the multitude of other voices.’³⁵⁸ In *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*³⁵⁹ the authorial self dominates local voices as an expert, assigning its own values to the folktales and providing specific contexts for interpretation. At the same time, however, this framework cannot be properly understood to be wholly monologic — the collected stories are products of indigenous culture recorded through local intermediaries. Meaning is generated through the interplay between the dominant expert position and subordinated local voices, as well as in the expert’s deployment of European systems of criticism and knowledge.

³⁵⁶ Temple, xxvi.

³⁵⁷ Renata Zurawska-Zyla, Elzbieta Chmielnicka-Kuter and Piotr K. Oles, ‘Spatial Organization of the Dialogical Self in Creative Writers,’ in *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*, ed. by Hubert J. M. Hermans and Thorsten Gieser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 253-263.

³⁵⁸ Zurawska-Zyla, Chmielnicka-Kuter and Oles, 262.

³⁵⁹ The encounter between storyteller and cultural archivist reflects what Philip B. Wagoner describes as a ‘collaborationist model’ of colonial knowledge, where local assistants served ‘as active partners in the process’ of colonial knowledge production, ‘bringing their own forms of knowledge and epistemic regimes to the dialogue.’ Phillip B. Wagoner, ‘Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.4 (2003), 783–814 (784-786).

Recalling that DST conceives of self as relational and expressed on a continuum of contingencies, it becomes necessary to identify these interactions in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*. In order to illustrate how the authorial self is defined by the expert position's dialogical relationships within the texts, this section examines the interplay between 1) self and the role of local voices, and 2) self and the texts' audience of European researchers.

The Authorial Self, Expert Position and Local Knowledge

Both Callaway and Temple claim their texts provide unique insight into the 'native mind' in Natal and North India. Though Callaway's collection of Zulu stories was initially intended for his 'own instruction'³⁶⁰ as he attempted to learn their language, the project's aspirations shifted towards a much broader work of cultural scholarship:

What was commenced as a mere exercise-lesson was soon pursued with the further object of discovering what was the character of the mind of the people with whom we are brought into contact; and of endeavouring to trace out their connection with other nations by the similarity which might exist in their traditions and myths, their nursery tales and proverbs.³⁶¹

Embedded within Callaway's mission statement is a shift in narrative dynamic — no longer a student of Zulu language, he casts himself as an authority on indigenous peoples' cultures and cultural psychology. As Rachael Gilmour notes,

³⁶⁰ Callaway, 'Preface,' *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus*, i-ii.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

Zulu-speakers may have had authority over their own language, but Callaway trumped this with the power to reveal their ‘character of mind.’ He was able first to deploy the written word, to transform their supposedly ephemeral and fleeting statements into an archive, and then to interpret this archive through mid-nineteenth century European comparative scholarly and theological frameworks.³⁶²

This intersection of expertise, local cultural systems, and the production of colonial knowledge is consolidated in the authorial self, which enacts the threefold processes of writing, archiving and interpretation. ‘What has been [...] written’ through interaction with local collaborators, Callaway proposes, ‘can be read to the native who dictated it; corrections be made; explanations be obtained; doubtful points be submitted to other natives; and it can be subjected to any amount of analysis the writer may think fit to make.’³⁶³ He further details the collaborative nature of his enterprise in *Some Remarks on the Zulu Language*, writing that ‘there are minute idioms which can only be understood by minute investigation and constant comparison of word with word and sentence with sentence, and a constant appeal to native authority.’³⁶⁴

Though acknowledging a ‘constant appeal to native authority’ in dealing with tricky phrases, Callaway’s preface to *Nursery Tales* suggests that it nevertheless remains the *writer’s* prerogative and duty to apply interpretation and derive meaning from what has

³⁶² Rachael Gilmour, ‘A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs’: Missionary Language-Learning in Mid-Nineteenth Century Natal,’ *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33.3 (2007), 521-538 (p. 532).

³⁶³ Callaway, ‘Preface,’ i.

³⁶⁴ Henry Callaway, ‘Some Remarks on the Zulu Language’ (Pietermaritzburg: P. David & Sons, 1870), 31.

been transcribed, not the native's³⁶⁵ — 'I could write with greater facility, until at length there was no subject on which I could not obtain the most accurate information possessed by the natives themselves.'³⁶⁶ The expert reproduces local cultural information gathered through local informants and interpreters but affirms that he is as knowledgeable and authoritative as the assistants themselves — in an 1862 letter to the Bishop of Cape Town, Callaway claims his understanding of Zulu religious systems exceeds that of locals, writing he 'entered far deeper than the natives themselves could penetrate.'³⁶⁷ The expert position reproduces the Zulu language 'as nearly as possible [to] such as it is spoken by the natives in their intercourse with each other,'³⁶⁸ but the fixity of the written word casts the text's authorial self as final arbiter of what locally-sourced cultural information is of value and what may be discarded.

A similar colonial expert-native authority relationship unfolds in *Legends*. In his preface to the text's first volume, Temple acknowledges the vital role of Indian *munshis* (scribes) to his project and provides an example of the editorial interventions required of the conscientious folklorist. Observing that these secretaries possessed 'an immense contempt for the language of the vulgar,' he writes that 'the itch they possess for

³⁶⁵ A notion ironically complicated by Callaway's reliance on this 'native authority.' As Gilmour and Chidester note, Callaway's principal local source on Zulu religion, Umpengula Mbande, did not necessarily provide a neutral or complete account of indigenous practice: 'Chidester's arguments suggest that while Callaway sought — and assumed he had found — a straightforward and unmediated version of Zulu religion, what he got instead was Mbande's meditations upon his own complex and ambivalent theological position.' Rachael Gilmour, *Grammars of Colonialism: Representing Languages in Colonial South Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 164.

³⁶⁶ Callaway, i.

³⁶⁷ Henry Callaway to Bishop Gray (8 July 1862) in Chidester, 'Classify and Conquer.'

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

‘improving’ the language of the bards is so great, that it requires much patience on the master’s part to see that they successfully resist.’³⁶⁹ The material process of translation, he writes, involves *munshis* roughly recording a bard’s recital in the local dialect, then re-writing this draft in Persian with the bard’s own clarifications and comments noted in the margins. Temple transcribes ‘the whole’³⁷⁰ of this intermediate rendering in Roman characters, finally translating the story into English. As Naithani observes, by this point, ‘the published text had thus gone through not only many minds but also many languages,’³⁷¹ a multi-voiced re-telling of local lore, twice-filtered through bard and scribe before even being handled by Temple.

The relationship between the expert position and indigenous voices in *Legends* is couched in Temple’s advocacy of this process-based approach to folklore, which he describes as ‘scientific.’³⁷² Proposing that only through a scientific study of folklore are native practices and customs revealed to the attentive scholar, Temple calls on folklorists to venture beyond empiricism and incorporate a rigorous knowledge of local vernaculars, histories, religions, ethnologies, philosophies and geographies in their research. This model of classing and categorization is one of his text’s defining features, from the stories’

³⁶⁹ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xi.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Sadhana Naithani, ‘The Colonizer-Folklorist,’ *Journal of Folklore Research* 34.1 (1997), 1-14 (p. 4).

³⁷² Historian David Arnold describes this impulse as typical of western scholarship’s ‘aggressive and crudely materialistic’ approach to science in India during the Raj, noting a compulsion to ‘subdivide scientific fields.’ David Arnold, *Science, Technology and Medicine in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 175.

headings and historical notes through the inclusion of grammatical charts and regional phonology. In the preface to his second volume, Temple writes,

Except as a science I venture to assert that Folklore is not worth serious study at all [...] Just as physiologists are enabled by a minute and exact examination of skulls or teeth or hair and so on to differentiate or connect the various races of mankind, so should Folklorists, as in time I have no doubt they will, be able to provide reliable data towards a true explanation of the reasons why particular peoples are mentally what they are found to be. Folklore then as a scientific study has a specific object and occupies a specific place.³⁷³

In characterizing his work in folklore as scientific research, Temple attempts to establish a sense of discursive mastery over his subject matter. The expert position of the authorial self in *Legends* emerges from this instinct to organize and collate the notes and texts produced in collaboration with local sources — while reducing the varied voices of its sources to a neutral literary register.³⁷⁴

Here, too, the link between self and the native voices that constitute the heart of Temple's work is dialogic and relational. Legends are always 'extracted'³⁷⁵ from storytellers; bards, poets and minstrels are 'caught' and may be divided into kinds and

³⁷³ Temple, *Legends* vol. II, p viii.

³⁷⁴ Temple concludes his Romanized rendering of 'Ismail Khan's Grandmother' with an asterisk, noting at the bottom of the page, 'The bard here wound up his poem with eight lines devoted to personal abuse of the present Chief Muhammad Ismail Khan of Jhang, apparently because the Chief had not treated him with the consideration he thought fitting on some occasion. The lines are therefore omitted.' Temple, *Legends* vol. ii, 496.

³⁷⁵ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xxiv.

classes³⁷⁶; folktales may be systematized and anatomized into their constituent elements as ‘all stories are worked on the same principles,’³⁷⁷ regardless of regional origins; though ‘there has been no attempt at systemic order in recording the tales’³⁷⁸, they may be categorized as part of narrative cycles and classed as heroic legends, hagiography, saintly histories, modern mythical ballads, or national ballads, depending on local perspectives.³⁷⁹ Temple’s commitment to process even extends to his account of which variety of native storyteller is susceptible to which particular narcotic inducement:

The *bhât*, the *mîrâsî*, the *bharâîn*, the *jogî*, the *faqîr* and all of that ilk are in truth but a sorry set of drunkards as a rule — tobacco, opium and a little food sufficing for their daily wants, and I have found that a small payment, say one or two rupees for each separate song, and their keep in food and an abundance of their favourite drugs while employed, has amply satisfied them.³⁸⁰

As in *Nursery Tales*, the expert passes final judgement on the suitability and value of diverse local contributors. Both texts construct the authorial self through this interplay between expert and local cultural knowledge, placing these troves of information ‘before European students’³⁸¹ for scholarly consideration.

³⁷⁶ Temple, *Legends*, vi-ix.

³⁷⁷ Temple, xviii.

³⁷⁸ Temple, *Legends* vol. II, xi.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Temple, x.

³⁸¹ Temple, *Legends* vol. II, v.

The Authorial Self, Expert Position and European Knowledge

In addressing this expertly-sourced data to European researchers, the dialogic composition of the authorial self takes a slightly different shape. While the expert position's relationship with local voices is concerned with imposing organization and interpretation — the processual features of selection, consultation, compilation and translation — its relationship with European peers and contemporaries is concerned with affirming the scholarly legitimacy of these processes — the critical contexts in which organization, interpretation, selection, consultation, compilation and translation are conducted. The two core concepts employed by Callaway and Temple discussed in this section are classification and the comparative method; this section explores how the expert position employs the vocabulary of these European critical perspectives in order to situate *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* as part of a cultural exchange between colonies and Europe.

In 'Lectures on the Science of Language,' Müller asserts,

The object of classification is clear. We understand things if we can comprehend them; that is to say, if we can grasp and hold together single facts, connect isolated impressions, distinguish between what is essential and what is merely accidental, and thus predicate the general of the individual, and class the individual under the general. This is the secret of all scientific knowledge.³⁸²

Müller suggests that classification, a systematized scope and object of research and data, allows the critic to more productively engage and link 'single facts' to broader observations

³⁸² Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1862), 1-49 (p. 21-22).

and conclusions. In this way, individual strands of information and knowledge may be generalized to form new values and interpretations of both their constituent threads and interconnected arrangements. Classification is also useful in the application of the comparative method to the study of cultures and languages, providing a rationale for the grouping together of related cultural or linguistic units.

Described by historian Edward Augustus Freeman in an 1872 lecture at Cambridge as ‘the greatest intellectual achievement of our time,’³⁸³ the comparative method provides a critical framework in the hypothesized reconstruction of proto-languages and proto-cultures by comparing the qualities and features of their descendants. In *Essays on the Science of Religion*, Müller remarks,

The Science of Language has sanctioned a totally different system of classification [...] the Comparative Philologist ignores altogether the division of languages according to their locality, or according to their age, or according to their classical or illiterate character. Languages are now classified genealogically, i.e. according to their real relationship [...] All these languages [linked genealogically and emerging from a common source] together form one family, one whole, in which every member shares certain features in common with all the rest, and is at the same time distinguished from the rest by certain features peculiarly its own.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Edward A. Freeman, *Comparative Politics. Six Lectures Read Before the Royal Institution in January and February 1873. With The Unity of History. The Rede Lecture Read Before the University of Cambridge, May 9, 1872* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1873), 1.

³⁸⁴ Müller, ‘Lecture on the Vedas or the Sacred Books of the Brahmans, Delivered at Leeds, 1865,’ in *Chips from a German Workshop Volume 1: Essays on the Science of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867), 22.

Callaway and Temple employ these critical voices both as justification for the study of folklore as a valuable repository of local cultural knowledge, as well as to direct readers towards potentially productive research paths.

Describing his approach to Zulu orthography in the preface to *Nursery Tales*, Callaway writes,

I have [...] departed as little as possible from the mode of spelling already in use for it appears better to continue for a time some things which are felt to be unsatisfactory, than to introduce new characters, according to one's private fancy, which may not be adopted by others, and which would only have the effect of removing to a greater distance the attainment of a uniform orthography. The system of Max Müller is more available for missionaries [...] I have, as far as possible, followed his principles, as laid down in his *Survey of Languages*.³⁸⁵

His adherence to established systems of knowledge and classification — Müller's 'more available' linguistic strategies — bring the authorial self's expert position into direct critical dialogue with European scholarship. In modelling his work on Müller's well-known positions on comparative language theory, Callaway provides contemporary researchers a familiar framework within which they may conduct their investigations. The authorial self's intersection with European philological and comparative theories then becomes a relationship of validation, where readers are invited to consider and interpret Callaway's collected folk stories in the same comparative context in which they have been assembled

³⁸⁵ Callaway, *Nursery Tales*, iv.

and transcribed. In a footnote, for instance, Callaway observes, ‘there [are] left many tales in the folk-lore of different peoples so similar not only in their general characteristics, but also in their details; and also some things so strange, that one feels compelled to refer them to a common origin.’³⁸⁶ This approach appears to have been effective, at least among the press endorsements included in *Nursery Tales* —

The student of ethnology, or of that interesting branch of knowledge which is now entitled comparative mythology, will find rich materials in this book, and will be grateful to the large-minded missionary who, amid more serious occupations, and many harassing cares, has opened a new intellectual field to European explorers.³⁸⁷

It is undoubtedly a work that will teach the pure idiom of the Zulu language better than any other book yet published [...] The matter continues most interesting to all persons who care to compare the varieties of life amongst different people and races.³⁸⁸

Callaway’s characterization of *Nursery Tales* as a ‘student edition [...] the student whether of the Zulu language or of comparative folk-lore’³⁸⁹ recalls nineteenth-century comparative strategies in linguistics, religion and mythology. Though more fully explored in Callaway’s ‘Fragment on Comparative Religion,’ where he more explicitly argues that spiritual self-awareness is an essential facet of the human character — even ‘among the heathen, especially the learned of Greece and Rome, we see [...] a fundamental belief in one

³⁸⁶ Callaway, 199.

³⁸⁷ ‘From the Mission Field’ in *Nursery Tales*.

³⁸⁸ ‘From the Natal Mercury’ in *Nursery Tales*.

³⁸⁹ Callaway, ‘Preface to the First Volume,’ i-ii.

God; and also among the people everywhere evidences of a moral law which [...] ought to determine man's conduct'³⁹⁰ — the explicit inclusion of comparative critique in *Nursery Tales* aligns his work with scholarly interest in uncovering intertwining cultural roots and histories. Here, too, the expert position attempts to affirm the intellectual legitimacy of Callaway's text by establishing his research within the context of European critical theory.

Temple's systems of textual organization are similarly indebted the popularity of comparative linguistics within colonial folkloristics. In his preface to the third volume of *Legends*, Temple writes,

The surest way therefore of projecting oneself into the folk-mind — so far as such a process is possible — is, with the aid of a loose and simple general sequence or classification, to take the various points as they have seemed to grow one out of the other in folk logic and processes of thought [...] The value of the Legends for local historical purposes and for the linguistic forms in which many of them are conveyed [...] can be gauged by experts from the typical tables to be found in the course of my remarks that follow [...] It is my hope that the tables will bring home to some of my readers what a wide and fruitful field any given collection of Indian tales affords; how well worth indexing they are for those who seek to get at the roots of the genuine lore of the folk in any portion of the world.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Henry Callaway, 'Fragment on Comparative Religion' (London: For Private Circulation Only, 1874), 19.

³⁹¹ Temple, *Legends* vol. III, ix.

Temple intends his tables and classification of linguistic forms and thematic tropes to serve comparative inquiry into both 'the folk mind' and 'the roots of the genuine lore of the folk in any portion of the world.' The expert position's relationship with these critical methodologies frame *Legends'* pedagogical outlook as an effort to account for the social psychology of 'particular peoples'³⁹² and to encourage research into the cultural continuities between them. In the text's first volume, for example, Temple remarks,

My readers who are acquainted with the books about the Slavonic nations of Europe, will probably have been surprised to find how closely, allowing for difference of religion and climate, the manners and customs of the peasants resemble those to be seen every day in Aryan India, and how very similar the functions of the bards of the two peoples are.³⁹³

The mention of 'Aryan India' in context of cultural similarity again appeals to the study of comparative linguistics, history and mythology. Müller's linguistic distinction between Aryan and Semitic peoples in *Lectures on the Science of Language*,³⁹⁴ for instance, classifies Eastern European Slavic languages as part of the Indo-European family, a connection broadened by Temple to include 'the manners and customs' of Slavic and North Indian 'peasants' and 'bards.' In the same vein, comparative historian and jurist Henry Sumner Maine's 1871 *Village-Communities in the East and West* employs 'Aryan' as a conceptual

³⁹² Temple, *Legends* vol. II, viii.

³⁹³ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, xxvii.

³⁹⁴ Müller introduces the word 'Aryan' to describe the Indo-European 'family of speech,' among which he includes the Slavonic, Teutonic, Celtic, Hellenic, Italic, Iranic and Indic branches (p. 84). He ascribes the Semitic family of languages three branches: Aramaic, Hebraic and Arabic (p. 319).

category of analysis in order to highlight similar systems of social organization in North India and Europe, noting how ancient Teutonic concepts of land ownership '[have] been reconstructed by the help of observed Indian phenomena.'³⁹⁵ To comparative scholars like Maine, 'North India effectively was an Aryan museum, where the early forms of Aryan society were frozen and on display for the European observer.'³⁹⁶ In *Legends*, the idea of 'Aryan' as a critical trope emerges through the expert's dialogic relationship with European theory. Here, too, Temple submits to scholars a tantalizing symmetry worthy of investigation, classifying cultural knowledge in anticipation of future comparative research.

Narrative Strategies in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*

The authorial self in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* is outward-looking, a mediating presence between readers and the indigenous forms knowledge within the texts that also provides a framework for critical interpretation. In reframing performances or recitations of songs, poems and ballads as written source material for scholarly inquiry, Callaway and Temple attempt to standardize the prosody of their various native sources through a 'flattened' narrative register. This 'flattening' is achieved through the authors' reconstruction of their stories' oral idioms in a consistent narrative voice that subordinates poesy to scholarly utility. The following readings demonstrate how Callaway and Temple's narrative strategies prioritize this pursuit of this knowledge over the literariness of the stories.

³⁹⁵ Henry Sumner Maine, *Village-Communities in the East and West* (London: J. Murray, 1871), 18.

³⁹⁶ Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 52.

In his introduction to *Nursery Tales*, Callaway dismisses the literary value of the stories as negligible, writing, ‘one cannot but feel that one has here put together a great deal of what is supremely ridiculous, and which considered by itself may well be regarded as utterly unworthy of being perpetuated.’³⁹⁷ His interest in Zulu fables does not lie in their literary character or in the merits of their storytelling techniques, but in what cultural information and insight they might provide. Accordingly, his translations are flattened, stripped of their original cadence and rhythm in order to affect a neutral narrative perspective. The song in ‘Umkxakaza-Wakogingqwayo,’ a refrain in the section ‘Umkxakaza by her incantations, raises a tempest, which destroys many of her enemies,’ illustrates how Callaway reworks rhyme and repetition into a basic, unembellished, format —

We zulu le. Wo, mayoya, we.

We zulu. Li nga dumi nokuduma.

Li dumel’ emabilweni. L’enza ni?

Li dumela ukunu nokupendula.

Listen, yon heaven. Attend; mayoya, listen.

Listen, heaven. It does not thunder with loud thunder.

It thunders with an undertone. What is it doing?

³⁹⁷ Callaway, 1.

It thunders to produce rain and change the season.³⁹⁸

His commitment to narrative clarity is immediately reflected the prosaic adaptation of the Zulu's ABAB scheme, which rhymes 'we' with 'ni' and 'nokuduma' with 'nokupendula.' Callaway obscures the character of the original incantation, its plays on assonance and consonance, and removes the implied emotion in the exclamatory appeal of 'wo' ('oh!'), which he reproduces as 'attend.' The awkward construction of 'it does not thunder with loud thunder / it thunders with an undertone' is rooted in Callaway's decision to define – *duma* as 'thunder' as both verb and noun in 'dumi,' 'nokuduma' and 'dumel' — however, *duma* may also be translated as a noisy burst, roar, boom, or explosion, resulting in a more poetic rendering along the lines of 'the thunder does not rumble / it roars with an undertone.'

While Callaway effectively discards the song's poetic features, his attempts to link the refrain to similar episodes in European cultural tradition relies on specific comparisons to literary practice. Though his notes cite Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Christus* and *Hiawatha*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Henry Kirke White's 'Gondoline: A Ballad' as cultural 'points of contact,' he does not read them as artistic analogues or consider them part of a shared poetic genealogy. Instead, his analysis focusses on possible connections between the texts in context of a 'universal deluge'³⁹⁹ — as intercultural retellings of the Biblical flood. In this sense, the purpose of his narrative flattening lies in shifting focus from

³⁹⁸ Callaway, 203-205.

³⁹⁹ Callaway, 205.

a story's creative composition to its plot, where interpretive frameworks may be more effectively applied and thematic relationships given more prominence.

Temple adopts a similar position in *Legends* through his commitment to the 'scientification' of folk studies. The eleventh entry in Temple's series, 'The Story of Râjâ Mahî Parkâsh of Sarmor,' for instance, typifies Temple's dedication to classification. His notes open by locating Kyonthal as a hill state near Simla and contextualizes the legend as a 'well-remembered fight'⁴⁰⁰ between the Rajas of Kyonthal and neighbouring Sarmor, remarking in the next paragraph that the story represents 'strictly local' history, making it 'quite hopeless to ascertain who the many minor personages, that figure in it, were.'⁴⁰¹ The following two sections of notation concern princely genealogy and attempt to sketch the characters' historical roots amidst muddled dates and much discrepancy.

Temple places the story within an ordered sequence, writing, 'four of the hill legends about Simla will be given in succession as they bear upon localities closely connected geographically and historically, and are all in the same dialect'⁴⁰², and comments on the broader linguistic implications: 'the language of these hill songs is very archaic and peculiar, and of considerable value in tracing the history of the modern Aryan dialects.'⁴⁰³ Over three full pages of grammatical forms, pronominal forms and vocabulary follow in translation before readers arrive at the actual textual material under consideration.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁰ Temple, *Legends* vol. I, 367.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Temple, 368.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Temple, 368-371.

Attributed to a pair of Kolî performers, ‘a caste who are weavers and singers by profession,’⁴⁰⁵ the vernacular version of ‘Râjâ Mahî Parkâsh’ opens with the loosely structured metre and rhyme typical of North Indian bardic recitations:

Tabê bârâ baras Maî Râjâ jorî Kyonthal nârâzi.

Tabê Nâhan sî Râjâ taîuî fauj pâi jorî.

Tabê jî derâ âyâ thâ Râjâ râ Balag rî serî.

Tabê jî Balag rî bastaro goe bhângîro devî.

Tabê Dharmî Bâhmanî mat lî kamâi:

Tabê Râjâ âyo goyâ charhîro dere âumî jâe.

Tabê thâlî bharî motî rî bhetâ Râjâ khi lê.

Tabê Râjâ taînî Mahî ghâi phîtri pheri.⁴⁰⁶

The formal characteristics of the above excerpt illuminate the process of North Indian oral convention, where bards often learned stories and poems by rote. The repetition of the adverb *tabe*, meaning ‘then’ or ‘next,’ occurs throughout the body of the narration and functions as a means of accelerated exposition, a bare bones sequencing and re-telling of events. The stop-start sentence structure and irregular rhyme scheme serve the similar purpose of allowing the speaker to get to the broader narrative point, in this case territorial competition, as economically and expediently as possible. Pleasing idiomatic expressions as *bârâ baras*, ‘twelve years,’ are notable for their poetical use of assonance and consonance.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Temple, 372.

Temple's rendering of this excerpt, meanwhile, preserves its plot-driven formal structure while largely discarding these literary features:

When Mahî was twelve years old the Râjâ of Kyonthal quarrelled with him.
 Then the Râjâ (Mahî) collected his army at Nàhan:
 And the Râjâ took up his station at the plans of Balag,
 And the people of Balag ran away.
 Then Dharmî, the Brâhmanî, made a plan,
 (That) as the Râjâ had come she would go to his camp.
 So she took a platter filled with pearls as a present to the Râjâ.
 But Râjâ Mahî turned his back upon her.⁴⁰⁷

In diminishing the literariness of its source material, Temple, like Callaway, subordinates the vernacular of bardic prosody to the material plot of the story. For instance, a more poetic translation of the line '*Tabe Dharmî Bâhmanî mat lî kamâi*,' might offer 'Then Dharmî, the Brâhmanî set her mind to work' or 'put her mind to use,' but is instead reduced in *Legends* to the most basic expression of its general idea, 'Then Dharmî, the Brâhmanî, made a plan.'

A similar phenomenon appears in the *Legends*' twenty-ninth story, 'The Story of Râjâ Jagdeo.' The story follows a disinherited prince who, on receiving a prophecy that he will one day kill his brother, leaves his country and embarks on a series of adventures — slaying a demon that demands human sacrifices, marrying a princess, performing miracles

⁴⁰⁷ Temple, 375.

and proving his spiritual mettle before a cruel and disbelieving king. Relating Jagdeo's victory over the demon, and his return to the city he has liberated from the demon's curse, the bardic vernacular and translation run,

Âfat kê sir kê, zor Jagdeo dikhâe.

Lîa hath kê bîch dast sajje se chae.

Âfat kê sir kêtkê jiwâe dar par kharâ:

'Bûa khol kiwâr kê, ham ghar Bâhman kê chalâ'

Jagdeo showed his prowess and cut off the demon's head.

He took it in his right hand.

He cut off the head of the demon and stood at the city gate,

(And said) 'Open the leaves of the gate, I would go to the Brâhman's house.'⁴⁰⁸

Châr chîz achhî nahîn hotî, hâthiwân, sârwân, gurîwân, darwân. Wân kê lafs acchâ nahîn hotâ.

Four things are evil, elephant-driver, camel-driver, cart-driver, doorkeeper. *Wân* is a bad ending to a man's name.⁴⁰⁹

Ai mânas darwân, tumheîn dar kuluf utâro!

Ai mânas darwân, kyâ hai châlâ thâro?

Hamrâ kahâ mân le, jo yeh bhalon kê rît:

Ham to khâs Rajpût hain, jo tum se rakûn prît.

⁴⁰⁸ Temple, 190.

⁴⁰⁹ Temple, 191.

O friend door-keepers, open the locks of the gate.

O friend door-keepers, what is your intention?

Hear my words, as good men should:

I am a real Râjpût that is your friend.⁴¹⁰

Literary devices present in the bard's recital are shorn in favour of unadorned narrative exposition. Although some formal elements remain, such as repetition, Temple's versions are content to convey the essential information of the story rather than attempting to imitate the wordplay of the original. The line 'lîa hath ke bîch dast sajje se châte,' which may be rendered as 'taking it in hand, grabbing it with his right,' is turned into 'he took it in his right hand,' undermining the dramatic effectiveness of the active voice. Similarly, the 'châr chîz' aphorism — 'a well-known bon-môt'⁴¹¹ — is stripped of its chief characteristic, the musical movement of its syllables, and presented in unattractive literal translation. The same is true of the final excerpt, where Jagdeo's impassioned plea to the gate-keepers, punctuated in the Romanized vernacular by an exclamation mark, is reduced to a docile appeal marked by a full-stop.

Here again, Temple frames his discussion of the legend as part of a scientific knowledge project. '*Châr chîz achhî nahîn hotî*' is discussed in the context of North Indian linguistics rather than lyricism — 'the play is on the termination *bân* and there is properly an answer — '*Hân, mirharbân*: Just so, kind sir.' *Mirharbân* [...] having also this objectionable termination *bân* (or *wân*).'⁴¹² In other ballads, accounts of saints are

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Temple, 191.

scrutinized for genealogical and chronological consistency rather than literary effectiveness, as in ‘The Legend of Shâh Qumês’ — ‘the story of the saint’s and his father’s royal marriages in Bengal, though not impossible [...] is not, so far as I can ascertain, supported by history’⁴¹³; even ghost stories are opportunities to observe inter-caste relationships, as in ‘The Legend of ‘Abdu’llâh Shâh of Sâmin’ — ‘the Syâls are of Râjput origin, and claim higher rank than the surrounding Jatt tribes, to whom they will not give their daughters in marriage, although they may marry Jatt women.’⁴¹⁴

These narrative strategies reiterate Callaway and Temple’s interest in providing cultural researchers with as much data as they can muster, affirming *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* as cultural projects rather than literary investigations. Both texts reconstruct their native storyteller’s source material in a flat, consistent narrative voice, in order to facilitate the discovery of ‘unsuspected points of contact’ between cultures. The critical starting points and glosses provided in the texts’ notes and commentary are fundamentally concerned with establishing contexts for intercultural analysis, not in discussing the artistic qualities of the stories themselves.

Conclusion

In *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*, Callaway and Temple attempt to establish new bodies of knowledge around Zulu fables and North Indian folktales for the benefit of colonial missionaries and administrators, European scholars and amateur folklorists. To these

⁴¹³ Temple, *Legends* vol. III, 92.

⁴¹⁴ Temple, *Legends* vol. III, 177.

latter groups, their texts and advocacy for a 'scientific' folkloristics represent both the legitimacy of folklore studies as a discrete field within contemporary cultural sciences and a justification for more research in area. A brief notice in an 1883 issue of *The Folk-Lore Journal*, for instance, remarks on 'Captain Temple's constant and valuable labours,' enthusing 'every public library should certainly possess [his] collections,' and observing that that his publications 'are exceedingly valuable, because every student of culture knows that India so often supplies the key to many of our western Aryan customs and early fancies.'⁴¹⁵ The same issue ranks Callaway's 'Nursery Zulu Literature' first among 'the most important items' being compiled for the Society,⁴¹⁶ noting that 'the value of these collections has long been recognized.'⁴¹⁷

For both Callaway and Temple, the authorial self and expert position provides a platform to articulate their own positions on linguistics, translation and propose methodologies for interpreting authentic local cultural practice. *Nursery Tales*, for instance, forms part of Callaway's response to Bishop Colenso's views on Zulu language and religion and attempts to contextualize future scholarship on South African religious systems within this framework. Similarly, *Legends* offers several critical starting points for colonial ethnographers, anthropologists, linguists and philologists in its notes and prefatory material. The writers cast their texts as colonial knowledge projects rooted in the authority of method and the authenticity of native voices as rendered through the expert position. *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* operate as primary source materials that subsume the uncertain

⁴¹⁵ *The Folk-Lore Journal* 1.12 (1883), 399.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 404.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 403.

transience of oral performance within the more permanent, and therefore definitive, written word.

As Naithani observes, British folklore collectors generally regarded themselves as either historians and ethnographers, '[preservers] of that which the natives themselves could not preserve,'⁴¹⁸ entertainers providing pleasant diversions 'with the narration of exotic stories from faraway lands,'⁴¹⁹ or curators, '[creators] of archives of knowledge that would further create knowledge and also influence the state policy.'⁴²⁰ Self in Callaway and Temple's texts is framed as historian and curator, a figure whose intimate understanding of 'exotic' peoples may be leveraged to legitimize cultural analysis and interpretation forwarded by European scholars or the author himself. In this sense, *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*' imagining of the expert position represents the interpretive aspects of the authorial self — the dominant narrative mode that initiates dialogue between local and European voices within the texts, negotiating cultural value and meaning. The 'expert' is fundamentally a discursive position in aid of making the colonial subject knowable and 'producing knowledge that linked together languages, scripts, and religious communities.'⁴²¹

Employing the idea of authorial self and the expert position in conceptualizing the texts' editorial interventions proves useful in interrogating the mechanics of colonial knowledge production and Callaway and Temple's assumed mastery of regional oral

⁴¹⁸ Naithani, 20.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Mir, 42.

traditions. The dialogical critical framework required in this analysis reveals the extent of *Nursery Tales* and *Legends*' engagement with their sources and source material, as well as with nineteenth-century European critical theories and theorists. Self in these texts represents a complex network of interconnected narrative positions between the author, local voices, readerships and critical frameworks — a site where cultural information may be collected, synthesized, anatomized, interpreted and reconstructed.

Chapter 4: The Divisible Self — Global-Local Journeys in G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952)

*Damme, I am not in the least aesthetic, but the [...] vernacular came out of me spontaneously, absolutely!*⁴²²

G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*

*I noticed that they had [...] artificial heads, but they were talking as human-beings, although they were talking with curious language.*⁴²³

Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*

While the idea of self in Callaway's *Nursery Tales* and Temple's *Legends* is represented through dialogic intervention in aid of authorial order, and emerges in Mahomet and Equiano's texts from between colonial cultural spheres, self in the postwar novels examined in this chapter is characterized by a multiplicity of positions between global and local spaces. Self and identity in G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* and Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* negotiate local forms and traditions in context of increasingly globalized systems of cultural exchange and dissemination. Their protagonists' potential self positions arise from intersecting cross-cultural fragments of language, knowledge and memory, as well as the texts' engagement of the intercultural and interlingual spaces where new positions may be constructed.

⁴²² G.V. Desani, *All About H. Hatterr* (Bungay: Penguin, 1972), 126.

⁴²³ Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 52.

Self in *Hatterr* and *Drinkard* moves between cultural spaces through continuous mixing and combination, an elision of cultural boundaries spurred by the ‘unprecedented density of positions’⁴²⁴ engendered by globalization. Technological achievements in travel and communication during Desani and Tutuola’s lifetimes — commercial aviation, television, and the creeping ubiquity of the home telephone, for instance — brought cultures, countries and citizens from around the world into closer contact with each other than ever before. This sense of intercultural ‘nearness,’ where many different voices and positions are suddenly made perceptible and accessible, reflects what social theorists describe as a compression of space and time. John Allen and Chris Hamnett’s account of globalization in *A Shrinking World?: Global Unevenness and Inequality* provides a basic definition of this concept — ‘the reordering of distance, the overcoming of spatial barriers, the shortening of time-horizons, and the ability to link distant populations in a more immediate and intense manner.’⁴²⁵ Barney Warf adds, ‘time-space compression tends to make places and peoples once thought of as remote and exotic closer and more familiar.’⁴²⁶

Though Warf is describing a Eurocentric position, one of remote geographies and exotic cultures, authors like Desani and Tutuola engage these complex networks of intercultural exchange in their texts and examine its relationship to colonial subjectivity. This chapter discusses how *Hatterr* and *Drinkard* interrogate the self in the context of this time-space compression, the collision of different cultural positions in and between local

⁴²⁴ Hermans, 32.

⁴²⁵ John Allen and Chris Hamnett, in *A Shrinking World?: Global Unevenness and Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9.

⁴²⁶ Barney Warf, *Time-Space Compression: Historical Geographies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 8.

and global spaces, through each author's approach to language. In *Hatterr*, through its protagonist's use of language to re-position self, subjectivity and identity, in *Drinkard* through Tutuola's processes of self-translation from Yoruba into English.

Theorizing Space and Self

The idea of space as a critical discourse within postcolonial theory builds on the works of such cultural critics as Edward Said,⁴²⁷ Homi Bhabha,⁴²⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,⁴²⁹ Stuart Hall⁴³⁰ and Arjun Appadurai.⁴³¹ The 'spatial turn' in interdisciplinary cultural scholarship, including literary criticism, contends 'spatial processes [shape] social form just as much as social processes [shape] spatial form,'⁴³² stressing the interconnectedness and discursive relationships between physical geography, nationhood, culture, politics and economics. Within these frameworks, self and identity are linked to the idea of positionality within space — as Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker write in 'Locating Liminality: Space, Place, and the In-Between,'

⁴²⁷ Most notably in *Orientalism* (1978), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (1994).

⁴²⁸ *Nation and Narration* (1990), *The Location of Culture* (1994),

⁴²⁹ *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987), *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990), *Death of a Discipline* (2003).

⁴³⁰ 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms' (1980), 'The Question of Cultural Identity' (1992), 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' (1997).

⁴³¹ *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996).

⁴³² Edward W. Soja, 'Taking Space Personally,' *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Barney Warf and Santa Arias (New York: Routledge, 2009), 11-35 (p. 21).

To speak of space was thus to speak of how space was occupied — and by whom — and the ways in which space in turn affected and determined the behaviour of those who occupied it, passed through it, and interacted with it.⁴³³

In the context of postcolonial literary theory, space becomes an important site of contestation and negotiation for individual subjectivity within colonial and postcolonial spaces.

In *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, Sara Upstone proposes a poststructuralist critique of the ‘colonial myth of spatial order,’⁴³⁴ suggesting that the original condition of all discursive space before the intrusion of empire and capital is one of fluidity. She introduces the idea of ‘chaotic space,’ the unordered fluidity of reality, as a site of possibility and mobility for individual subjectivity. Chaotic space represents ‘not [...] a complete breakdown of all stability, but rather [...] a removal of the fixed to open up new patterns of understanding and experiences.’⁴³⁵ While this discursive opening up to the possibilities of subjectivity may suggest resistance to colonial and capitalistic orders, it also gestures towards the justification and rationale behind its imposition. Chaos ‘may be used as much in the service of oppression as a solution to it [...] colonial regimes themselves may employ disorder as a means to secure power.’⁴³⁶ Conceiving of chaotic space as the natural

⁴³³ Dara Downey, Ian Kinane and Elizabeth Parker, ‘Locating Liminality: Space, Place, and the In-Between,’ *Landscapes of Liminality: Between Space and Place*, ed. by Dara Downey, Ian Kinane, and Elizabeth Parker (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd, 2016), 1-26 (p. 10).

⁴³⁴ Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics of the Postcolonial Novel* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 11.

⁴³⁵ 12.

⁴³⁶ 8.

state of spatial order reveals the colonial organization of space within borders, maps and literatures as something artificial, 'mythic' and 'fabricated',⁴³⁷ an 'overlaying of diverse space that is employed to reinforce colonial authority.'⁴³⁸

By engaging positions of fluidity, mobility and multiplicity in chaotic space, colonial and postcolonial writers like Desani and Tutuola disrupt the spatial contiguity and permanence of colonial discourses — the idea of fixed territories, geographies, cultures, languages and subjectivities — in favour of new imaginings and possibilities beyond colony and nation. In her chapter 'The Fulcrum of Instability: Postcolonial Journeys,' Upstone writes,

The passage of the journey offers an example of chaotic space presenting engagement with 'heterogeneous' and 'in-between' places that may challenge stable constructions of place [...] For the postcolonial author the journey represents the possibility to escape the limits of national space. It is a metaphor for a world in which movement, facilitated by air travel and global communication networks, undercuts national belonging with an international perspective.⁴³⁹

These intersections of chaotic space, heterogeneity, the in-between⁴⁴⁰ and journey are where the interpenetrative aspects global-local spaces may be observed and critiqued in

⁴³⁷ 11.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ 57.

⁴⁴⁰ Bhabha describes the 'in-between' in his introduction to *The Location of Culture* — 'Those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood — singular or communal — that initiate new signs of identity [...] It is in the emergence of the interstices — the overlap and displacement of domains of difference — the intersubjective

context of the dialogical self. The ‘density of positions’⁴⁴¹ characteristic of compressed time and space, the multitude of cultural voices and values, play out in chaotic space, where a priority on fluidity and multiplicity allow these voices to be integrated or discarded. Through journey and contact with other collective or individual subjectivities, self positions are reformulated and reconfigured, becoming ‘more heterogeneous and laden with differences, oppositions, and contradictions.’⁴⁴² Through these processes, hybrid subjectivities and positions, ‘combinations of global and local elements,’⁴⁴³ may be cultivated, tested and explored.

These critical perspectives shape this chapter’s analysis of fluid subjectivities amid global and local spaces in *Hatterr* and *Drinkard*. Desani’s *Hatterr* maps reimaginations of self onto its protagonist’s journey through chaotic cultural spaces, shifting between a multitude of languages and voices between cultures in the construction of hybrid identities. Tutuola’s *Drinkard* similarly engages the possibilities of heterogeneity in its account of the Drinkard’s journey to Deads’ Town through the unordered fluidity of ‘interlanguage,’ which supplants plot as the text’s site of narrative self position.

Language and Subjectivity

and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated... [The] interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.’ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge: New York, 2004) 1-4.

⁴⁴¹ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 76.

⁴⁴² 32.

⁴⁴³ 76.

Hatterr and *Drinkard* both interrogate the relationship between language and the in-between spaces where self may be constructed. The novels' frequent linguistic interventions defamiliarize language, with *Hatterr*'s multilingual interjections and *Drinkard*'s curious syntactic constructions signalling a departure from traditional compositional strategies. Although the texts share a mutual disregard for narrative-linguistic convention, they do so in markedly different fashions. Desani draws on over ten languages in *Hatterr*, ranging from Hungarian and Urdu to Spanish and Japanese, which act reflexively upon each other throughout the text. Tutuola bases his non-standard English on the syntactic rhythms and grammar of the Yoruba language, establishing an intra-textual dialogue between representation and expression, relating Yoruba cultural tropes through the expressive medium of English.

Hatterr, 'the first major Indo-Anglian work to look at Indian realities through the eyes of an Anglo-Indian,'⁴⁴⁴ explodes notions of colonial subjectivity in order to explore the fluidity of identity and demonstrate how conceptions of the self may be shaped and reshaped from within in-between spaces through language. Tutuola's text, situated within the linguistic in-between, 'demonstrably [subverts] all the known acceptable registers of current English usage in its structural, lexical and semantic components,'⁴⁴⁵ sustaining a literary idiom that represents Yoruba cultural experience in English. In this sense, both

⁴⁴⁴ Chelva Kanaganayakam, *Counterrealism and Indo-Anglian Fiction* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2002), 63.

⁴⁴⁵ Abubakar Aliyu Liman, 'Quixotic Muse and Creative Adventure: Interrogating Modern Nigerian Literature in the Context of Nigerian English,' *Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association* 15.1 (2012), 141-152 (p. 147)

texts employ language as something constitutive of self rather than as a means of interpreting subjectivity.

In *Verbal Hygiene*, Deborah Cameron outlines two diverging conceptions of the relationship between language and self within linguistic and sociolinguistic theory —

In critical theory language is treated as part of the explanation. Whereas sociolinguistics would say that the way I use language reflects or marks my identity as a particular kind of social subject [...] the critical account suggests language is one of the things that *constitutes* my identity as a particular kind of subject.

Sociolinguistics says that how you act depends on who you are; critical theory says that who you are (and are taken to be) depends on how you act.⁴⁴⁶

Chris Weedon situates this distinction within poststructuralist criticism in *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging: Narratives of Difference and Belonging*, writing,

In Lacanian, Derridean and other poststructuralist theories, the speaker is never the author of the language within which s/he takes up a position. Language pre-exists and produces subjectivity, identity and meaning. For example, language in the form of competing discourses offers the individual meanings and forms of subjectivity

⁴⁴⁶ Deborah Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995; repr. Routledge Linguistics Classics, 2012), 15-16.

that they can assume and live as if they were true. In the process they become subjects.⁴⁴⁷

Alternatively, in discourses of resistance or when enacting positive identification amid imposed social or political structures,

Language *constitutes* rather than reflects or expresses the meaning of experience and identity. This approach opens up subjectivities and identities to processes of cultural struggle and resistance. Subjectivity (consisting of an individual's conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions and desires) is also constituted in language, and rational consciousness is only one dimension of subjectivity. It is in the process of using language — whether as thought or speech — that we take up positions as speaking and thinking subjects and the identities that go with them.⁴⁴⁸

This chapter's analysis of *Hatterr* and *Drinkard* builds on these latter interpretations of language (co-)constituting subjectivity, illustrating how the texts deconstruct and reconfigure subjectivity and positionality through language and intercultural linguistic exchanges. Desani and Tutuola's unique narrative strategies engender 'authorship' over their novels' language and voice their protagonists' subjectivity as something rooted in linguistic invention — facilitated by access to a range of voices in unordered, chaotic, space.

Following each author's historical and biographical contexts, this chapter's textual analysis examines the relationship between language and subjectivity within these fluid

⁴⁴⁷ Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004), 13.

⁴⁴⁸ 17-18.

cultural spaces. In *Hatterr*, 1) its interrogation of language and difference, 2) the relationship between subjectivity, space and distance, and 3) its protagonist's creative approaches to self-realization. In *Drinkard*, 1) its systematic approach to expression and representation, 2) the linguistic 'in-between,' and 3) the 'psychic translation' between local and global voices.

G.V. Desani (1909-2000) and *All About H. Hatterr*

Born in Nairobi to Indian parents in 1909 and raised in Hyderabad, Sindh (now in Pakistan), Desani was expelled from school for insubordination and attempted to run away from home at least three times before finally making his way to England at 17, where he would spend time at the British Museum Reading Room.⁴⁴⁹ Desani returned to India a few years later to serve as a correspondent for the Associated Press, before moving back to London during World War II and finding work in broadcasting at the BBC. Around this time, he began the research that would ultimately filter into the character of H. Hatterr: 'By that time my range was such that I could speak with authority. I gave this spacious mind to this fellow Hatterr. He had all the disadvantages, like no parents. He is everyone.'⁴⁵⁰

Originally published in 1948, in the shadow of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and the year after India won independence from Britain, *All About H. Hatterr's* richly allusive multilingual world and comic absurdity immediately set it apart from the social realism of

⁴⁴⁹ Now the British Library.

⁴⁵⁰ G.V. Desani interviewed by Khan, 'All About Desani.'

such contemporary novelists as Raja Rao⁴⁵¹ and Mulk Raj Anand.⁴⁵² *Hatterr* won immediate praise as an innovative and playful riposte to European literary modernism. An unsigned 1951 *Time Magazine* review declared its author heir to Kipling⁴⁵³, and T.S. Eliot remarked, 'certainly a remarkable book [...] it is amazing that anyone should be able to sustain a piece of work in this style and tempo at such length.'⁴⁵⁴ Eliot's admiration of Desani's facility with language and the novel's utterly unique linguistic register was echoed by Anthony Burgess, whose 1969 introduction to the book enthused,

It is the language that makes the book, a sort of creative chaos that grumbles at the restraining banks. It is what may be termed Whole Language, in which philosophical terms, the colloquialisms of Calcutta and London, Shakespearian archaisms, bazaar whinings, quack spiels, references to the Hindu pantheon, the jargon of Indian litigation and shrill babu irritability seethe together. It is not pure English, it is, like the English of Shakespeare, Joyce and Kipling, gloriously impure.⁴⁵⁵

In a 1982 article for *The Times*, Salman Rushdie expanded on Burgess's idea of the 'gloriously impure' English that characterized *Hatterr*, adding a postcolonial dimension to his commentary.⁴⁵⁶ Desani, he wrote approvingly, demonstrated 'how English could be bent and kneaded,' noting that 'English, no longer an English language, now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized are carving out large territories within the

⁴⁵¹ Kanthapura (1938).

⁴⁵² Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1936), The Village (1939).

⁴⁵³ 'Where Kipling Left Off,' *Time Magazine*, 18 June 1951.

⁴⁵⁴ T.S. Eliot, back cover blurb, *All About H. Hatterr*.

⁴⁵⁵ Anthony Burgess, Introduction to *All About H. Hatterr*, 7-11 (p. 10).

⁴⁵⁶ Salman Rushdie, 'The Empire Writes Back With a Vengeance,' *The Times*, 3 July 1982, 8.

language for themselves [...] I don't think there's another language large or flexible enough to include so many different realities.'⁴⁵⁷

Despite these accolades, and endorsements from the likes of E.M. Forster and Saul Bellow, the novel languished in critical obscurity following the publication of a final revised edition in 1972. Interest in the book was revived a decade later by a generation of Indian writers who viewed the text as an instructive example of how English language and literature could be reappropriated and reclaimed from colonial discourse.

In "'Ambiguity at its Best!': Historicizing G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*,' Eric D. Smith warns, 'the reader of *Hatterr* must be suspicious and adept at dispelling the credible illusions within Desani's polyphonic text, willing to see through the pratfalls of the novel to the social and political commentaries that they often conspicuously conceal.'⁴⁵⁸ Building on the stylistic and thematic connections between James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Hatterr* outlined by Srinivas Aravamudan,⁴⁵⁹ Smith suggests Desani 'articulates a gestural critique of Indian nationalism'⁴⁶⁰ through the novel's protagonist, taking aim at 'the populace of the newly independent India, whose national identity, constructed in opposition to that of its colonial counterpart, rests on a foundation of [...] charlatanry and false essentialism.'⁴⁶¹ The

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Eric D. Smith, "Ambiguity at its Best!": Historicizing G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*,' *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 40.2-3, 111-134 (p. 112-113).

⁴⁵⁹ Srinivas Aravamudan, *Guru English* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 126-141.

⁴⁶⁰ Smith, 118.

⁴⁶¹ 134.

problem with this reading, he acknowledges, is that Desani makes no such commitments in the text. 'Despite the fact that *Hatterr* is written at precisely the climactic moments of India's independence and the horrors of partition that follow,' Smith laments, 'no clear trace of these extraordinary historical events is directly evidenced in the events of the novel.'⁴⁶²

In a recent essay, Jason R. Marley links this critique to issues of self, identity and subjectivity in Desani's novel, writing,

Throughout the novel, it is resoundingly clear that Hatterr is never certain of just who he is; his language and identity are in a state of perpetual flux [...] there is an explicit tension evident in his narration, as the sense of cultural, linguistic, and national anxiety that defines his identity emerges in the narrative as a series of stoppages, omissions, and metafictional interruptions.

Yet the protagonist's frantic, disjunctive narration is potentially problematic, in that its formal experimentation and linguistic hybridity seem to exist in an apolitical, ahistorical void. [...] I read Desani's disavowal of history as an attempt to make the reader complicit in acts of colonialist oppression. By coercing and manipulating the reader to ignore and critique acts of colonial resistance, Desani's text mimics the insidious means through which colonial powers devalue the agency and identity of colonized peoples.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶² 113.

⁴⁶³ Jason R. Marley 'Misunderstanding is Universally Rampant: Misinterpretation, Mistranslation, and Colonial Authority in G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr*,' *College Literature* 43.4 (2016), 668-692 (p. 669-670).

In pursuit of a historicized critique of coloniality within Desani's 'ahistorical' and 'apolitical' text, Smith and Marley give short shrift to the possibility that self in *Hatterr* articulates its own resistance to oppressive discourses — constructing a highly individualistic subjectivity beyond and between Western and Indian cultural spaces. Throughout the text, *Hatterr* contests the imposition of any kind of identity or subjectivity, whether western or Indian. Contrast, for instance, self in *All About Hatterr* to Jawaharlal Nehru's remarks on the nature of Indian identity in *The Discovery of India*,

Whatever the word we may use, Indian or Hindi or Hindustani, for our cultural tradition, we see in the past that some inner urge towards synthesis [...] was the dominant feature of Indian cultural, and even racial, development. Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture, but it was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of absorption. This was also a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however, remaining much the same.⁴⁶⁴

Hatterr rejects synthesis in favour of unruly variety, rejects absorption in favour of individual self-realization and fundamentally rejects the notion that there is an 'essential basis' to culture and self. Through its chaotic staging of intercultural exchange, *Hatterr* represents an alternative to this pairing of 'new blooms' with 'essential basis' — signalling that subjectivity is marked by the recognition of difference, not through assimilation.

⁴⁶⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London: Penguin, 2004), 72.

Molly Ramanujan and Amardeep Singh provide a more productive framework for Desani's text, regarding the novel as primarily philosophical in tone. Ramanujan locates the novel in the existentialist tradition of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, noting both novels are framed as 'auto-biographicals' rather than works of fiction and are fundamentally 'preoccupied by questions such as 'What is truth?' and 'What is communicated?'"⁴⁶⁵ Tongue-in-cheek, the absurdity of the narrative attempts to prove 'that there is no such thing as probability, causality, logic or truth when writing about India.'⁴⁶⁶ In *Hatterr*, 'traditional notions of plot, character and action are based on ethical dualism [...] Desani espouses both postdualistic Western thought as well as the nondualistic aspect of traditional Hindu metaphysics.'⁴⁶⁷

Amardeep Singh's essay 'More than 'priestly mumbo-jumbo': Religion and Authorship in *All About H. Hatterr*' builds on Ramanujan's idea of *Hatterr* as 'philosophical fiction.'⁴⁶⁸ Disputing Aravamudan's view that the text satirizes the discourse of mimicry, he writes, 'I see Desani's novel, and Desani himself, as disinterested in nationalism and disinclined to make a motivated critique of a certain colonial mentality.'⁴⁶⁹ Singh instead proposes that the novel's central theme relates to 'the anxiety of a late colonial Indian

⁴⁶⁵ Molly Ramanujan, *G.V. Desani: Writer and Worldview* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1984), 69.

⁴⁶⁶ Ramanujan, 52.

⁴⁶⁷ Ramanujan, 51.

⁴⁶⁸ Ramanujan, 29.

⁴⁶⁹ Amardeep Singh, 'More than 'priestly mumbo-jumbo': Religion and authorship in *All About H. Hatterr*,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46 (2010), 89-100 (p. 96)

author as he struggles to represent an evolving relationship to a kind of [esoteric] Hindu religious practice.’⁴⁷⁰

All About H. Hatterr — Textual Analysis

Framed as an episodic autobiography of its titular protagonist, Hatterr proves more commentator than narrator, far more interested in imparting the lessons from his travails than in relating a coherent story. The main autobiographical element in the novel lies in its introduction, where Hatterr relates the uncertain circumstances of his birth and education. Hatterr, which he claims is a pen name, describes himself as the son of a Christian European seaman and East Asian woman of unknown origin. His father, he says, died of malaria soon after the family moved to India, whereupon the local Christian authority sued his mother for custody on religious grounds. He was subsequently adopted by an English Missionary Society and raised a Christian. An autodidact, Hatterr runs away from the school in his teens to ‘win my bread and curry all on my own,’⁴⁷¹ taking with him an English dictionary, a pair of beginners’ workbooks in Latin and French, and a stereoscope with slides of Italy, France and England. Here, Desani immediately establishes the global-local cultural spaces Hatterr inhabits — while making clear he does not emerge from within these cultures. While the significance of the textbooks and slides is initially underplayed, it set two important thematic details into motion: Hatterr’s position in a fluid cultural space and the idea that culture is something to be handled and manipulated.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Desani, 32.

As a self-styled cultural vagabond, it is often difficult to identify Hatterr's assumed self position, even as he engages new potentialities. Describing a bust-up at an Indian private-members club for English expats, he confesses he was admitted 'under false pretences, as an India-born, pure Cento-per-Cento Anglo-Saxon breed'⁴⁷² while simultaneously prefacing this account with 'Damme, I will go Indian! Live like you fellers [...] go to flannel dances! No fancy rags! The sahibs have kicked me. But for that kick, mark me, I will return ten, till the seats of their pants wear out!'⁴⁷³ Hatterr's agency is absolute — he moves between local and global spaces at his convenience. Fundamentally, the character of Hatterr subverts the idea that outsider spaces must be sites of passive capitulation to dominant discourses. His refusal to yield to any system of imposed categorization and pursuit of identity beyond the socially loaded Anglo- and Indo- prefixes is significant. In casting hyphenated identity as disposable and arbitrary, Hatterr demonstrates how 'in-betweenness' itself serves as a platform to reinvent and reconfigure self in a globalized context.

Although Hatterr operates from an in-between space of cultural ambiguity by virtue of his upbringing and mixed-race parentage, his identity is ultimately self-conceived and heterogeneous. While his strategies towards self are fundamentally constructive, engaging and unpacking various linguistic registers and cultural signals to create his own subjectivities, they serve to underscore difference and distance rather than act towards an integrated hybrid system. Hatterr does not simply negotiate culture from the interstices of difference, he takes from culture indiscriminately — declaring bluntly at the novel's outset,

⁴⁷² Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*, 47.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

'I am debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians.'⁴⁷⁴ When Hatterr describes himself as 'biologically [...] fifty-fifty of the species'⁴⁷⁵, he situates himself within an outsider's perspective that unshrouds and demystifies his appreciation of cultural difference.

Language is the text's chief site of contestation, with frequent interventions and contortions of vocabulary and vernacular feeding into a jumbled transcultural heteroglossia. The effect is one of disorienting defamiliarization, with borrowed and invented verbiage entering the narrative seemingly at random, complicating language's role as a reliable signifier of culture and identity. It is left to the reader to parse the labyrinthine internal logic that leads Hatterr to such exclamations as 'Every little helps, as the old lady said when she emptied the pot in the Pacific, old feller! Whiskey ja soodavesi, met het *leetle* spuitwasser! La, what a cup final!'⁴⁷⁶ — 'whiskey and soda-water, with a little squirt of water' — incorporating, in order, English, Finnish, Dutch, phonetic English, and a portmanteau of Dutch and German. The substance of this particular quip lies in the origins of the word 'Whiskey,' which derives from the Old Irish 'uisce,' meaning water — Hatterr links the proverb about emptying water into an ocean to a joke about asking for water with soda-water, with a dash of water.

This characteristically abrupt shift from conversational English to other languages, and then to a further interlingual contrivance, draws instant attention to difference. Hatterr's linguistic ambivalence speaks to a broader attitude toward cultural value in the text — in estranging language and culture through a relentless campaign of multi- and

⁴⁷⁴ Desani, 33.

⁴⁷⁵ Desani, 31.

⁴⁷⁶ Desani, 163.

interlingual juxtaposition, he strips them of any especial prerogative or significance. In turn, divesting linguistic and cultural cues of normative privilege and reducing them to flat components of an eclectic dialogic motif refocusses attention on the conceptual distance between words and what they are intended to signify. In the *sputtwasser* passage, for instance, Hatterr offers five consecutive articulations of water, each expressing a different meaning. He revisits this theme towards the end of the novel, setting up a spiritual metaphor by asking, 'Hell, what is *Truth*? [...] Posterity expects: and no dam' usefunking the issue. But can words ever communicate *Truth* — whatever it is?'⁴⁷⁷

Another way of conceptualizing language and difference in *Hatterr* is through the idea of distance, as articulated in Bhabha's model of 'in-betweenness.' The in-between suggests a network of interconnected relationships between a subject's positions relative to different cultural spaces. Within this framework, difference arises from 'the perspectival distance'⁴⁷⁸ of the subject in relation to these spaces. One of the main ways *Hatterr* relates this 'perspectival distance' and cultural difference in the text is through the subjective distance established between Hatterr and other characters.

Hatterr's ability to create his own cultural realities through language sets up an immediate distance between himself and all that occurs without. He enunciates cultural identity rather than simply inhabiting it — a quality not shared by *Hatterr*'s supporting cast, whose presence in the text is comically facile. His dogsbody Banerrji, for instance, is a benign colonial stooge whose only function is to sputter banal paeans to western

⁴⁷⁷ Desani, 274.

⁴⁷⁸ Bhabha, 243.

superiority, 'The Bard has said, Who steals my purse, steals trash! Nevertheless, Mr H. Hatterr, ahead of us is Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble! I am not a sob-sister, but, excuse me, the situation reminds me of Hamlet. To be! But firstly, let us be calm, honest Iago.'⁴⁷⁹ Anglos like cockney circus manager Bill Smythe and Major Appadine-Sinclair are reduced to parody: 'a 'oly do with a girly wot caulled 'erself Rosie 'Awkins and sold dawgs up 'Ampstead 'Eath'⁴⁸⁰ and 'Shurru! Shurru, carn't yer? I'll crown yer ruddy block, if yer won't!'⁴⁸¹, 'A native secret society, by jove, what?'⁴⁸² Others, including sundry swamis and fraudulent yogis, are doled similarly nonsensical snatches of dialogue, 'Explore the great depths! [...] Explore the Infinite Depths! O suckling lost in eternal darkness, quieten the drone of false knowledge in thine ears! Hang not upon the rope! But suck the nectar instead! The Juice of the great life-giving Plant!'⁴⁸³

The sustained counterpoint provided by these characters to Hatterr's own words and actions reveals a gap between the one-dimensional cultural site they occupy and the complex cultural spaces Hatterr brings into existence. The following passage, for example, describes a dreamscape combining elements of Raj slang, English music hall, Italian conductors and French Canadian folksongs, among others —

It used to be my habit in India to invite dreams [...] One morning, after my early morning *chhota hazri* of the usual — the salted quinine tonic and soda, tea, toast (and downing half a rotten egg) — like l'après midi d'un faunwallah — I was dilly-

⁴⁷⁹ Desani, 112.

⁴⁸⁰ Desani, 74.

⁴⁸¹ Desani, 87.

⁴⁸² Desani, 248.

⁴⁸³ Desani, 167.

dallying in bed [...] Soon, in dreamland!

I was inside La Scala, Milan. The maestro Toscanini was conducting the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra. And the repertoire to be presented was the items (1) Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow (La Scala *chorus*) *Vow-Vow!* (2) Rule Britannia! (3) Nutcrackers of Canada (4) *Alouette (chorus) Alouette!* (5) Souza's S. & S. for ever! (6) Otchi Tchornia (Russian percussion) (7) Buz, buz, buz, quoth the blue fly (English Glee).

... Then a dignified gentleman walked up the stage [and] made a brief speech [...] 'You will be glad to hear, ladies and gentlemen, that our exertions on your behalf have borne fruit. The *New York Times* newspaper has amalgamated with the *Frankfurter Zeitung!*'⁴⁸⁴

Banerji's one-note homage to Shakespeare and the various Anglos' cartoonish exclamations contrast sharply with the lively intercultural bombardment Hatterr unleashes upon the text. While Banerji's witless devotion to the bard simply reasserts the primacy of British literature, Hatterr subverts and tests its authority:

What the hell do you know of *Life*? [...] You only read that damme *writer* Shakespeare. The Bard this, the bard that! I had rather be a dog, and bay at the moon! [...] I am not literary, I admit you that. But I tell you, man, I have seen more *Life* than that feller Shakespeare! Things happen to me with accents on 'em! If I were to tell all, right from the au commencement to the la terminaison of my life-story, I

⁴⁸⁴ Desani, 107-8.

should like to see some honest critic pronounce me inferior to Shakespeare! [...]

This is the Twentieth Century!⁴⁸⁵

This passage explicates the crucial link between cultural realities, difference and subjectivity developed by Hatterr over the course of the narrative. He constructs subjective identity by prioritizing what he calls, and italicizes, *Life* — in this context, a catch-all term referring to the experience of cultural difference, things ‘with accents on ‘em.’ Working from a position of discursive distance that transforms culture into a material to be freely processed and rearranged, Hatterr is able to assemble, dismantle and reassemble sites of difference. To Hatterr, identity and self are products of *Life* rather than discourse.

Throughout the text, Hatterr tries to cultivate subjectivity through his extraordinary treatment of language, positing his key framework in the novel’s concluding chapter:

All words are pointers, indicators, symbols: and there isn’t a single word in any lingo, dialect or doggerel, which is absolutely cast-true, suggesting in the exact infallible, *Truth* [...] A *Truth*-thing, or a *Truth*-idea, might be an *a* [...] what a feller has is not an *a*, but an awareness of an *a* [...] He hasn’t the true *a*, but a *translation*!...

Now, if a feller has to communicate his-own idea and awareness of this *a* — let’s name it another *a* — to some feller, he has to use a word, a pointer, a shadowgraph, which might be a *b*. The message now is *a* (*Truth*), plus *a* (the notion of *Truth*), plus *b* (a word): *baa*. In other words, if a feller wants to tell another what *Truth-a* is like, he has to *aa* and *baa*!

⁴⁸⁵ Desani, 95.

All communicated and communicable knowledge is subject to this bashing-up.⁴⁸⁶

This rendering of the *Advaita Vedanta*'s principle of *maya*, the illusory reality that shrouds truth from consciousness, arrives at the crux of Hatterr's attitude toward subjectivity and identification. Language and communication, he argues, are processes employed in aid of approximating truth. Ultimately, language fails to adequately express truth, with communication merely propagating and reproducing this original deficiency. When Hatterr's brother-in-law complains 'that ruddy fool [...] picks up big words without knowing what they mean!'⁴⁸⁷ he misses the point: the problem does not lie with Hatterr, but with the words' own inability to express what he means. Language constructs realities, though not necessarily the unambiguous "highest reality"⁴⁸⁸ of serene enlightenment.

Hatterr's use of language is a creative act, allowing him to transcend the binary modes of expression that govern Banerji and his ilk. To Hatterr, language and identity are inextricably linked — it is not insignificant that his first act of self-realization, before running away from school, was to liberate its language books and dictionary. As the book's 'author,' he exists outside of the text and devises its reality; as a character, he uses words as a means of self-identification in an attempt to arrive at *Truth*. It is this linkage between language and self that locates Hatterr outside opposing colonial poles and as a creation unto himself, manufacturing his own subjectivity independent of colonial and postcolonial discourses. This recalls the 'medico-philosophical grammar'⁴⁸⁹ of contrast, his principle

⁴⁸⁶ Desani, p, 274-5.

⁴⁸⁷ Desani, 64.

⁴⁸⁸ Ramanujan, 30.

⁴⁸⁹ Desani, 23.

concerning ‘opposites and opposites’ — if the self is contingent on words, imperfect renderings of a universal truth, then the self is itself a function of an ongoing spiritual journey.

What do you expect of a damme *writer* of words, anyway? *Truth*? Hell, you will get *contrast*, and no mistake! I am myself an ordinary laity: no *writer*. But I say I know an *a* something. And I sum it up as *Life*. Now, *Life* distinguishes a feller from a stone. *Life* is feelings.⁴⁹⁰

Where the creative aspect of language enunciates self and identity, the performance of identity in *Hatterr* is achieved through journey, the ‘life-encounters’ that spur Hatterr into action. If difference and distance provide the conceptual underpinnings of *Hatterr*, then journey and performance are the subject and substance of its narrative.

At its core, the novel is a spiritual *bildungsroman*, with its seven chapters and introductory address each examining a road on Hatterr’s path toward *Truth* — a sort of postmodern pilgrimage. As Gerhard Stilz notes, ‘all the experiences of Hatterr’s ‘Life-Encounters’ [...] follow the teleological pattern that leads from existential fragmentation to spiritual restoration.’⁴⁹¹ Though only tenuously linear in arrangement, Hatterr’s journey is signposted by a series of plot cues — namely, the stumbling blocks obstructing his progress into illumination, including the carnal temptation posed by Rosie Smythe, the innumerable

⁴⁹⁰ Desani, 275.

⁴⁹¹ Gerhard Stilz, “Truth? Hell, you will get contrast, and no mistake!’: Sanitizing the Intercultural Polylemma in G. V. Desani’s *All About H. Hatterr*,’ *Hybridity and Postcolonialism: Twentieth Century Indian Literature*, ed. by Monica Fludernik (Tubingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1998), 79-101 (p. 95).

false holy men and swindlers, his catastrophic run-ins with genuine yogis, as well as Banerji's stultifying omnipresence and generally useless advice.

In his essay 'From Pilgrim to Tourist — or a Short History of Identity,' sociologist Zygmunt Bauman maps a system of 'modern life as pilgrimage,'⁴⁹² describing four iterations of the modern pilgrim: the stroller or *flâneur*, the vagabond, the tourist and the player. Of particular relevance here is his description of 'the player':

In play, there is neither inevitability nor accident (there is no accident in a world that knows no necessity or determination); nothing is fully predictable and controllable, but nothing is totally immutable and irrevocable either [...] the world itself is a player. In the confrontation between the player and the world there are neither laws nor lawlessness, neither order nor chaos. There are just the moves [...] The player's world is the world of *risks*, of intuition, of precaution-taking. Time in the world-as-play divides into a succession of games. Each game is made of conventions of its own; each is a separate 'province of meaning' — a little universe of its own, self-enclosed and self-contained.⁴⁹³

The worry of the player is that each game should indeed start from [...] 'square one,' as if no games were played before [...] one must make sure the game also has a clear, uncontested ending.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹² Zygmunt Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist — or a Short History of Identity,' *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 18-31 (p. 19).

⁴⁹³ Bauman, 30-31.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

Bauman's notion of pilgrimage and player runs through the text and structures Hatterr's misadventures, supplying an endpoint to his journey. The restlessness that motivates him to seek out sages and gurus, visit the Ganges, or temporarily become a renunciate is rooted in his search for *Truth*. If *Life* parcels cultural experience and difference into a loaded italicized signifier, *Truth* refers then to its essential meaning — what exactly experience and difference are meant to represent and signify, and how this relates to the self and identity. This is the unstated resolution of *Hatterr's* play and at the centre of its metaphysical inquiries: "To hell with Reason! To hell with judging! [...] I have no opinions, I am beaten, and I just accept all this phenomena, this diamond-cut-diamond game, this human horse-play, all this topsy-turvyism, as *Life*, as *contrast*. As to *Truth*, the great generalisation is, '*Dam' mysterious! Mum's the word!*'"⁴⁹⁵

The ambivalence that characterizes the player's relationship to the world coincides with Hatterr's spiritual disposition — he accepts the basic indifference of the cosmos, 'all this phenomena,' to the petty circumstances of his being, but is determined to interrogate this arrangement regardless. Hatterr engages the world as the player does, attempting to negotiate *Truth* through various difficulties and complications that the games inevitably hurl at him. This interaction is neither antagonistic nor conciliatory, but simply a matter of passage — a hedging of 'moves': "Things *are*. They are there. Good and bad. To hell with judging, it's Take it don't leave it, and every man for himself!"⁴⁹⁶ In the world-as-play, where the world itself acts a player, it falls to Hatterr to develop a methodology with which to

⁴⁹⁵ Desani, 154.

⁴⁹⁶ Desani, 277.

approach and distill *Truth* from journey. Eventually, his primary mode of investigation turns to *contrast*.

The third element in *Hatterr*'s trinity of italicized signifiers, *contrast* refers to an evolving personal philosophy that derives meaning from the 'opposites' encountered in life:

Dr Albert Einstein, the discoverer of the Theory of Relativeness, said to posterity in 1905, 'All motion is relative!' That was his *major*-Statement. He is an educated feller, a medico-philosopher enjoying world fame [...] I am a mere nobody, but I have carried out some research on my own. And I say to posterity, in the Twentieth Century, '*Life is contrast.*' That is *my crux*-Statement. Damme, look at *Life*! *Life* is ups and downs, light and shade, sun and cloud, opposites and opposites!⁴⁹⁷

Life is no one-way pattern. It's *contrasts* all the way. And *contrasts* by Law! Not just motley mosaic, not just crazy run-and-go-do-as-you-please *contrasts*, but design in 'em. There are flowers that bloom in certain seasons: and, *contrast*! *don't* bloom in certain seasons.

A hell of a puzzle?

Maybe: maybe not. It strikes a feller as a puzzle.⁴⁹⁸

If *Truth* proposes to locate a holistic explanation for *Life*, *contrast* is an attempt to rationalize its functions — serving as a practical reading of *Life* rather than a philosophical analysis of its significance. In the context of Bauman's play, *contrast* is the vehicle of

⁴⁹⁷ Desani, 155.

⁴⁹⁸ Desani, 275.

confrontation between Hatterr and the world-as-player, the conceptual material produced by moves in the game. The subtle emendation inserted between Hatterr's initial introduction of the term to Banerriji and his subsequent use of the expression at the end of the novel, as illustrated in the passages above, demonstrates a maturation and refinement of the concept — he clarifies that it is borne of deliberate design and is not merely a random catalogue of opposition. In identifying sites of *contrast*, Hatterr deconstructs and categorizes encounters with difference in order to work out how precisely *Life* operates.

This framework of opposition is reflected in the layout of the novel itself, with each chapter presented in the form of an argument: a proposal contained in 'instruction,' a 'presumption' addressing a speculative conclusion, and finally a 'life encounter' tracing the logic of Hatterr's actions and charting his movements within the broader narrative journey. Invariably, the issues raised in the instruction are muddled through the interventions impeding his progress. In the end, fittingly, he plays to a stalemate, ceding the impossibility of ever fully apprehending *Truth*, but is finally satisfied with what he learns about the performance of *Life* through *contrast*:

I am not fed up with *Life*. A sportsman, if at all genuine, never stops shooting.

He must carry on.

I carry on...

Meanwhile, and regardless, I am putting questions to fellers: *and* regardless of the unanswerable *What is Truth?* (And, regardless, *too*, of whatever the word *Truth* is

the *Translation* of!) [...] In the interim...while I wait, and you tell, *mach's nach, aber mach's besser, viz.,* Carry on, boys, and continue like hell!⁴⁹⁹

Another key connection between journey and performance in *Hatterr* is the idea of transformation. The transformative implications of the pilgrim's journey double as a strategy for the reinvention or reimagining of self: 'the world of pilgrims' is aligned with the world of 'identity-builders.'⁵⁰⁰ In *Hatterr*, costume is often the crucial link between journey, self and performance: just as language allows Hatterr to bring new cultural spaces into being, clothes and dress allow him to assume and signify an array of roles and identities.

In her introduction to *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, Emma Tarlo relates an anecdote concerning the utility of dress in India recorded by American missionaries interviewing an Uttar Pradesh villager: 'When we are to deal with strangers we suit to dress the occasion, not to our means. And most occasions call for poor clothes [...] We would be foolish to bring ourselves big bills, when the simple matter of dressing will give us charity rates.'⁵⁰¹ Similarly, when Hatterr is forced into hiding from an unscrupulous creditor, he adopts the garb and persona of an itinerant holy man: 'Having donned the loin-cloth, and applied the ash, I reflected on Banerrji's renunciation supposition. And I saw why the feller envied me. I felt wonderfully free. I felt freed of all troubles and responsibilities and restraints. The fakir fellers in the bush are free men.

⁴⁹⁹ Desani, 278.

⁵⁰⁰ Bauman, 23.

⁵⁰¹ Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), 8.

Clotheless, devoid of all personal worries [...] In India, if you decide to go religious, be a semi-Benedictine, a sacred chicken, belong to the Cloth, no need to hullabaloo at all. You simply cast off clothing.⁵⁰² Still wearing the loincloth, Hatterr goes on to relate a profound spiritual experience on the banks of Ganges, where he meditates on the solemnity of the occasion and the divine significance of the river. So totally does he inhabit the character of a yogi, he says, 'I felt lost, ego-less, identity-less, like one dead: yet at peace, at great peace, with all creation, all men, and my Maker-Destroyer Lord'⁵⁰³ — totally surrendering self to costume, and conveniently forgetting the matter of his outstanding debt.

There are a number of other incidents in the text where costume figures prominently in the narrative — Hatterr is stripped of his trousers, jacket, shirt, shoes, cuff-links and watch by the Sage of the Wilderness, who sends him away wearing a railway sack⁵⁰⁴; he is welcomed as a Hindu priest at Giri-Giri's recital while wearing a *kurta-pajama*, a traditional Indian shirt and trouser ensemble⁵⁰⁵; he dons a 'brief loin-cloth' and coats himself with ash, again in the manner of mystics and yogis, during his expedition for Mogul treasure⁵⁰⁶; he adopts the distinguished 'semi-nude required' along with an orange silk loincloth and apricot turban at the *abhisheka* ceremony he holds to honour himself⁵⁰⁷. In *Hatterr*, clothing simultaneously obscures and reveals the self, or a version of the self — the effect of this deliberate focus on dress draws attention to the various cultural spaces

⁵⁰² Desani, 118.

⁵⁰³ Desani, 132.

⁵⁰⁴ Desani, 52.

⁵⁰⁵ Desani, 175.

⁵⁰⁶ Desani, 198.

⁵⁰⁷ Desani, 238.

Hatterr eases in and out of, casting doubt whether he himself occupies any fixed sense of identity.

Hatterr's murky origins and his use of a pseudonym reinforce this sense of malleable identity. Significantly, he tells us the initial 'H' in the pen name H. Hatterr stands for 'Hindustaaniwalla'⁵⁰⁸: where 'Hindustaani' (Hindustan meaning India, so literally 'of Hindustan' or 'from Hindustan,' shorthand for 'Indian' in Hindi and Urdu) would ordinarily suffice, the suffix '-walla' obscures and complicates the issue, inviting two distinct interpretations. In Hindi, -walla affixes 'one who' upon the prefix — 'one who drives a rickshaw' or '*rickshaw-walla*,' 'one who is passionate' or '*dil-walla*'; in Anglo-Indian English, a slight re-purposing of the word suggests a more functional meaning, one who performs a task or activity as in the 'ticket-walla' ticket-seller. On the one hand, then, the deliberate malapropism 'Hindustaaniwalla' refers to 'one from among the Hindustaanis,' and on the other implies an actor in the role of a Hindustani. Hatterr confirms specific instance performativity in the novel's opening chapter, 'A Mutual Introduction,' pronouncing, 'I went completely Indian to *an extent few pure non-Indian blood sahib fellers have done*.'⁵⁰⁹

Performance in *Hatterr* proceeds from his conception of *Life* as the experience of cultural difference; Hatterr's own identity lies in the dynamic expression of this difference, shifting from babu to swami to Anglo club-goer as required. This pervading sense of ambiguity reiterates Hatterr's sense of 'in-betweenness' — a mixed-race semi-Christian exploring Hindu mysticism, guided by a loose internal framework of spiritual and

⁵⁰⁸ Desani, 33.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

philosophical systems assembled while undertaking a pilgrimage in search of a grand and unifying *Truth*. Recall that the text itself is presented as an ‘autobiographical,’ a performance of autobiography, and it becomes clear that the character and identity of Hatterr, an admitted *nom de guerre*, is whatever he wants it to be.

While my discussion of *Hatterr* has explored how the text’s approach to cultural difference and linguistic heterogeneity reimagines intercultural encounters as a means of establishing outsider identities, the following section on *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* focusses on the complications that arise from narrative combination and homogeneity. Although *Hatterr* and *Drinkard* both underscore cultural discontinuities within the self through their use of language, the novels differ in how they address this notion of disunity. Whereas Desani firmly divides *Hatterr*’s linguistic registers through constant intervention, Tutuola’s novel overlays two distinct cultural histories in an effort to represent Yoruba tropes through English-language expression.

Amos Tutuola (1920-1997) and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*

Written in 1946 and finally published by Faber and Faber in 1952, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was received warmly by western critics. Dylan Thomas lauded the novel as a ‘brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story [...] terse and direct, strong, wry, flat and savoury’⁵¹⁰,

⁵¹⁰ Dylan Thomas, ‘Blithe Spirits’ in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), 7-8.

while the *New Yorker* described it as an ‘enjoyable piece of effervescence [...] which combines the rigidity of form with freedom of embroidery [...] archaic without being anachronistic [...] an unrepeatable happy hit.’⁵¹¹ The response to the novel in Nigeria, however, was decidedly mixed, with critics decrying what they held as a brazen exploitation of existing Yoruba language folk collections for the sake of sating western appetites for exoticism. Its writing style was derided as backwards and unintelligible, and reflected poorly on Tutuola’s contemporaries. Writing to *West Africa* in 1954, Babasola Johnson summarized the prevailing critical mood in the country:

Now let us face facts. *Palm Wine Drinkard* should not have published at all. The language in which it is written is foreign to West Africans and English people, or anybody for that matter. It is bad enough to attempt an African narrative in ‘good English,’ it is worse to attempt it in Mr. Tutuola’s strange lingo [...] The book ought to have been written in West African Patois proper, or in Yoruba, but then Mr. Tutuola’s literary tactics would have been exposed. Besides the fact that his stories are well-known and have been published in one form or another, most of his plots were borrowed from Fagunwa’s *Ogboju Ode*.⁵¹²

Writing to the same journal a few months later, Isaac Adeagbo Akinjogbin lamented, ‘most Englishmen, and perhaps Frenchmen, are pleased to believe all sorts of fantastic tales about Africa, a continent of which they are profoundly ignorant,’ adding that Tutuola’s

⁵¹¹ Anthony West, Review of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), 17-18.

⁵¹² Babasola Johnson, letter to *West Africa* in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), 31-32.

books ‘will just suit the temper of his European readers as they seem to confirm their concepts of Africa.’⁵¹³

Contemporary criticism of *Drinkard* in West Africa typically played on its controversial use of language. Tutuola’s uneven formal education and the unlikely history behind *Drinkard*’s initial publication frame many of the complaints about the novel’s style and language. While Western audiences were willing to overlook the novel’s misspellings and ungrammatical style, charmed by what Oyekan Owomoyela describes as its ‘quaintness,’⁵¹⁴ the Nigerian reading public and academy largely regarded it with suspicion and disdain, a clumsy text authored by an untutored non-writer.

Born in Abeokuta, Nigeria, to a Christian family in 1920, details of Tutuola’s early life and schooling are uncertain. He was enrolled in a local Salvation Army school between the ages of 10 and 12, where he was described as ‘not a very promising student.’⁵¹⁵ In order to pay for his schooling, he took up a position as a servant to a government clerk at 12 years old, moving with him to Lagos in 1934 and attending Lagos High School for two years before returning to his original school in Abeokuta. Upon the death of his father in 1939, Tutuola returned to Lagos to become a blacksmith, eventually finding work in this capacity with the RAF in 1942, aged 22. After the war, Tutuola found himself unemployed for a year, finally finding a job in Lagos at the Department of Labour as a messenger in 1946 — it was here, in between errands and deliveries, that Tutuola found the time to commit *The Palm-*

⁵¹³ Isaac Adeagbo Akinjogbin, letter to *West Africa* in *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), 41.

⁵¹⁴ Oyekan Owomoyela, *Amos Tutuola Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999), 102.

⁵¹⁵ Collins, 17.

Wine Drinkard to paper, allegedly in two days: 'I was still in this hardship and poverty, when one night, it came to my mind to write my first book *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and I wrote it in a few days successfully because I was a story-teller when I was in the school.'⁵¹⁶

Submitting his written work to a local bookseller instead of a publisher by mistake, his manuscript nevertheless ended up with Faber and Faber, who agreed to publish the novel in 1952. Perhaps in response to West African criticism levelled at his ability, Tutuola enrolled in night classes in 1954 in order to improve his English, 'so that he [might] develop into what he describes as a 'real writer.'⁵¹⁷ Though Tutuola apparently did not harbour any aspirations towards a career in literature — 'he still wanted to be a blacksmith'⁵¹⁸ and continued to hold a day job — he continued to write: *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* followed *Drinkard* in 1954, with Tutuola publishing nine more books until his retirement in 1990. Tutuola died in 1997 of hypertension and diabetes, destitute at the age of 77.

Drinkard's publication coincides with two significant cultural shifts in Nigerian history and society, representing two different approaches to the construction of Nigerian identity — nationalist movements agitating for independence from Britain, and increasing urbanization. On the one hand, Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton write, nationalist sentiment prioritized the development and cultivation of 'a race consciousness focusing on a dichotomy between indigenous black African subjects and alien white European

⁵¹⁶ Alastair Niven, 'Obituary: Amos Tutuola,' *The Independent*, 16 June 1997.

⁵¹⁷ Lindfors, 291.

⁵¹⁸ Collins, 19.

rulers,’⁵¹⁹ an indigenization of national identity and consciousness defined against coloniality. On the other, increasing movement to urban areas like Lagos reinforced and encouraged intercultural mixing, producing a sense of self and identity anchored within global cultural exchanges rather than local transactions. Falola and Heaton write,

Urban areas developed completely different cultures and lifestyles from rural areas. Cities became attractive symbols of a new, modern Nigeria [...] people and cultures from throughout Nigeria, west Africa, and the world came together, learned from each other, and drew on each other, while rural areas remained more ethnically and culturally homogeneous.⁵²⁰

Drinkard’s intercultural linguistic manipulation echoes this sense of urban cosmopolitanism, while working within the narrative framework of a traditional folk story. The following section outlines several critical approaches to Tutuola’s constructive use of language as something in-between cultures and shaped by intercultural exchanges.

***The Palm-Wine Drinkard* — Critical Perspectives**

My work on Tutuola draws particular attention to Yoruba linguist Adebisi Afolayan’s ‘Language and Sources of Amos Tutuola’ which details how *Drinkard*’s use of English is structured and informed by the Yoruba language. Sifting through the ‘lively literary politics’ surrounding Tutuola amidst the generally unfavourable West African response to *Drinkard*,

⁵¹⁹ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 137.

⁵²⁰ Falola and Heaton, 155.

Afolayan suggests ‘a new way of looking at the language and, via language, the material of Tutuola.’⁵²¹ Describing the language of the text as ‘Yoruba English,’ he outlines how Tutuola’s phrasing and grammatical constructions may be understood to represent ‘psychic translations’⁵²² of Yoruba orthography.

Chantal Zabus engages Afolayan’s notion of internalized translation in *The African Palimpsest*,⁵²³ tracing Tutuola’s loan-translations (calques) back to their Yoruba roots. She observes that the ‘inconsistencies’⁵²⁴ in their application ‘leave little room for intentionality’ and indicate Tutuola ‘uses only the English words he knows, and his overall incorrectness does not stem from protest or a defiance of the literary establishment,’ concluding that ‘there is no coherent method of indigenization either in Tutuola’s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* or in his later work.’⁵²⁵ As Franca Cavagnoli notes, however, this linguistic maneuvering nevertheless yields rich intercultural exchanges —

The interferences of one language with another — the Yoruba that Tutuola spoke as his native tongue and the English he learned at the mission school — give rise to new and unexpected usages of the English language, where the creative popular spirit of the subordinates contaminates the dominant language. The outcome is a

⁵²¹ Adebisi Afolayan, ‘Language and Sources of Amos Tutuola,’ *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola*, ed. by Bernth Lindfors (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1975), 193-208 (p. 193).

⁵²² Afolayan, 206.

⁵²³ Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007)

⁵²⁴ 133.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

linguistic blend that on the surface reads like English, but in depth preserves the structures of Yoruba.⁵²⁶

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin describe Tutuola's unintentional style as 'interlanguage,' referring to the 'separate but genuine linguistic systems'⁵²⁷ cultivated by second-language learners and operating 'according to a separate linguistic logic.'⁵²⁸ In this sense, *Drinkard's* non-standard English emerges from the space between Anglo and African linguistic spheres as an individualized expression of Yoruba syntactic systems in English — a hybrid voice that lends its English vocabulary and grammar West African colour and texture. *Drinkard* is fundamentally double-voiced, a Yoruba text in conversation with Tutuola's limited English, stripped to its most basic and unadorned units of expression. This linguistic in-betweenness reveals a Yoruba text written in English, rather than an English re-telling of Yoruba story. Afolayan's suggestion that the jerky rhythms and cadences of Tutuola's writing style are an interlingual translation of Yoruba is of particular relevance here:

Tutuola's English can be regarded as a brand of 'Yoruba English' [...] in the sense that it represents the expression of either Yoruba deep grammar with English surface grammar, or Yoruba systems and/or structures in English words.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ Franca Cavagnoli, 'Translation and Creation in a Postcolonial Context,' *Language and Translation in Postcolonial Literatures: Multilingual Contexts, Translational Texts*, ed. by Simona Bertacco (London: Routledge, 2014) 321-348 (p. 325).

⁵²⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 66.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Afolayan, 194.

It seems reasonable to suggest that Tutuola first organizes his Yoruba material in his Yoruba mother tongue and then expresses the organized, though not necessarily vocalized or visually expressed, material in English. This means that some sort of translation (or at least psychic) of literature takes place.⁵³⁰

This sensibility is evident the unusual structure and phrasing of sentences like ‘When these field creatures saw that the king was not at home, they waited for half an hour before he came, but when we (my wife and I) saw him, he himself was refuse, because he was almost covered with both dried and undried leaves and we could not see his feet and face etc’⁵³¹ where Tutuola bends language into the grammatical shape of his Yoruba source material. Putting aside matters of (un)intentionality, the text’s non-standard English in context of its own narrative framework and logic must be regarded as an ‘in-between’ language that marries two different syntactic sensibilities in a unified formal structure.

The extract above also illustrates several characteristic features of Tutuola’s prose style: a clipped succession of pronouns — six in the twelve words spanning ‘he came’ to ‘he himself’; the use of parentheses to denote who exactly the narrator is referring to; an emphasis on cause and effect; and a succession of conjunctions collecting clauses into a single sentence — ‘but,’ ‘because,’ ‘and.’ The cumulative effect of these strategies is one of breathless exposition, the engine of *Drinkard*’s narrative energy. The curiously descriptive proper nouns indicating personage or attributing some abstract quality to people and objects are also rooted in Tutuola’s process of ‘psychic translation’ from Yoruba into

⁵³⁰ Afolayan, 206.

⁵³¹ Tutuola, 45.

English and the interplay between their cultural properties. On closer examination, they are often found to be rudimentary English renderings of knotty Yoruba phrases, as in the case of 'Unreturnable-Heaven's town' — a reimagined representation of 'the town in the other world which you visit and from which you never return'⁵³² — or folk archetypes, as with Drum, Song and Dance⁵³³ — well-established West African folkloric symbols.

In addition, Tutuola's frequent use of repetition and consonance refers to a common Yoruba folk contrivance: as Pamela J. Olubunmi Smith observes in an essay on Yoruba prose and translation, 'repetition for the sake of sound is a standard with [...] Yoruba writers generally.'⁵³⁴ The staccato phrasing of such passages as 'if bombers saw him in a town which was to be bombed, they would not throw bombs on his presence, and if they did throw it, the bomb itself would not explode until this gentleman would leave that town, because of his beauty'⁵³⁵ evoke D.O. Fagunwa's similar usage of literary devices in his Yoruba-language *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmale* (*The Forest of a Thousand Demons*, 1938) and *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Olodumare* (*The Forest of God*, 1949). Smith's translation of a passage in *Demons* reiterates this point: 'Even if the father that begat you is greater than other people's father(s), still the father that begat you is not greater than the father that

⁵³² Biodun Goke-Pariola, 'Language Transfer and the Nigerian Writer of English,' *World Englishes*, 6.2 (1987), 127-136 (p. 132).

⁵³³ Tutuola, 38.

⁵³⁴ Pamela J. Olubunmi Smith, 'Making Words Sing and Dance: Sense, Style and Sound in Yoruba Prose Translation,' *Translators' Journal*, 46.4 (2001), 744-751, 747.

⁵³⁵ Tutuola, 25.

begat me, therefore, please let me know the father that great father who is the father that begat you.’⁵³⁶

These examples return to the idea of cultural intelligibility and subjectivity in the text, and its relationship to the expressive and representative aspects of the novel. Where *Hatterr*’s self-reflexive ambiguity moves quickly through a succession of cultural spheres, *Drinkard*’s in-betweenness maintains a fixed position between Anglo and Yoruba worlds. The novel does not represent a convergence of cultural spaces, but is an attempt to parse one through the other from a position between them. *Drinkard*’s narrative logic rests on consolidating fragmentation — the bringing together of languages rather than building from their dissimilarity — and articulates difference in the representation of one culture through the expressive medium of another.

In combining Yoruba narrative forms with English, Tutuola initiates a dialogic confrontation between these two voices, each performing a specific role within the text: on one hand, the surface signification offered in English, and on the other, subtextual Yoruba cultural matter. In *Drinkard*, English expression is abstracted and complicated through its function as a means of enunciating another language’s inflection — denoting specific Yoruba referents but lacking the literary vocabulary to do so, as with the example of Unreturnable-Heaven’s town, or ‘Ilu orun aremabo (town beyond you go to and not return).’⁵³⁷ This disconnection makes explicit the text’s linguistic in-betweenness by marking precisely where its principal sites of cultural interest diverge: the text’s in-

⁵³⁶ D.O. Fagunwa, *Igbo Olodumare*, in Smith, ‘Making Words Sing and Dance: Sense, Style and Sound in Yoruba Prose Translation,’ *Translators’ Journal*, 46.4 (2001), 744-751, 746.

⁵³⁷ Goke-Pariola, 132.

betweenness builds an intercultural linguistic hybrid that repeatedly calls its own construction into question. In this sense, the confrontation within *Drinkard*, the destabilizing relationship between language and meaning — expression and representation — resolves into an examination of cultural difference from between languages.

Drinkard's hybridity arises through two colliding linguistic consciousnesses in the novel, one 'represented' and the other 'representing' — Tutuola's West African cultural material and his irregular English. The text attempts the perception or apprehension of Yoruba by English on two distinct levels: formally, Tutuola invents a series of syntactic parallels between languages; thematically, his African source materials are 'illuminated' for Anglophone readers through jarring literal translations. In addition to the stylistic tics noted in the previous section, the substance of the novel's folkloric quest narrative is a mediated intercultural encounter, furnished with parenthetical clarifications and, bizarrely, Imperial measurement conversions for its readership. Both instances reiterate the disruptive discontinuity of the novel's hybridity. Rather than attempting to reconcile its English text with its Yoruba content, it focusses on the differences between the two.

Unlike *Hatterr*, where the titular character is confronted with a cluster of intercultural spaces and possibilities for engagement, *Drinkard* operates within the closed cultural space of mythic Yoruba forests, towns and villages. Casual allusions to a world beyond the text's magical topography, then, arrive as jarring and confounding intrusions. Of particular interest is the narrator's insistence on introducing imperial measurements and currency into the text at regular intervals — 'if we put him on a scale by that time, he

would weigh at least 28 lbs'⁵³⁸; 'the fare for adults was 3d (three pence) [...] when we checked the money that my wife had collected for that day, it was £7: 5: 3d'⁵³⁹; 'we had 'sold our debt' to somebody at the door for the sum of £70: 18: 6d and 'lent our fear' to somebody at the door as well on interest of £3: 10: 0d;⁵⁴⁰ 'the hall was decorated with about one million pounds (£).'⁵⁴¹ The representative aspect of the novel's linguistic framework is suddenly turned on itself, with Tutuola using English to express a fundamentally English image — the British Pound served as Nigeria's national currency at the time of *Drinkard's* publication through to 1973, thirteen years after the country won independence — rather than employing his usual Yoruba narrative lens. Along with similarly dislocated references to telephones, cigarettes and airplanes, these abrupt shifts from 'Yoruba English' to the syntax of European commerce and technology reiterate that *Drinkard's* hybridity originates in difference and multi-voicedness.

In *Drinkard*, expression and representation do not converge in a single hybrid utterance. Instead, they run on parallel paths with widely divergent cultural contexts, the broad canvas of Yoruba cultural enunciation acting as the 'framing context' to Tutuola's English expression. This often dissonant relationship establishes two distinct and bounded cultural spaces, with the text serving as an intercultural prism at their interstices: *Drinkard's* ungrammatical English and linguistic idiosyncrasies act as refracted images of specific cultural markers. Cultural difference is communicated from these interstices

⁵³⁸ Tutuola, 37.

⁵³⁹ Tutuola, 39.

⁵⁴⁰ Tutuola, 67.

⁵⁴¹ Tutuola, 68.

through this process of refraction: the interplay between expressive and representative subtexts.

Consider *Drinkard*'s fantastic spirit world of bush creatures, ghosts and trickster babies. This supernatural dimension is rendered as a system of symbols where a person or object's attributes wholly subsume their identity — 'Death,' 'Deads' Town,' 'Unreturnable-Heaven's town,' 'Skull,' 'Laugh,' 'Faithful-hand,' 'Faithful-Mother,' 'Spirit of Prey,' the 'hungry-creature,' the 'complete gentleman.' The figure of Faithful-Mother, for instance, refers to both her essential character and name. The narrator himself is named 'Father of the gods,' to which he frequently appends, 'who could do everything in this world.'⁵⁴²

The interpretive possibilities arising from this symbolic order return to the text's multi-voicedness, abstracting several layers of meaning and significance through linguistic manipulation. Here, too, difference is built into the formal and thematic structure of the text, with signifiers' referents relying almost entirely on context. The 'complete gentleman,' for instance, is initially described as an actual man, 'dressed with the finest and most costly clothes, all the parts of his body were completed, he was a tall man but stout'⁵⁴³, who then starts returning 'the hired parts of his body to the owners [...] paying them the rentage money,'⁵⁴⁴ eventually becoming a 'half-bodied incomplete gentleman'⁵⁴⁵ —

Now this complete gentleman was reduced to head and when they reached where
he hired the skin and flesh which covered the head, he returned them, and paid to

⁵⁴² Tutuola, 10.

⁵⁴³ Tutuola, 18.

⁵⁴⁴ Tutuola, 20.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

the owner, now the complete gentleman in the market reduced to a 'SKULL' and this lady remained with only 'Skull.'⁵⁴⁶

At each leg of his journey into the forest, the complete gentleman is further diminished, a change reflected both in his outward appearance and name, from 'incomplete gentleman' to 'Skull.' To English readers, 'Skull' and the Skull family may refer to a particular species of forest demon, the proper name of a specific forest demon, the appearance of the demon, or an actual skull animated by magic. In context of its source material, the well-known Yoruba folktale 'Oloko sin lehin mi (Hoe-seller get back),'⁵⁴⁷ 'Skull' takes on more sinister significance, with the association between hoes, grave-digging and death.

The narrator's experience with the 'Good Creatures' of the forest offers an elaboration on this sustained symbolic logic, simultaneously complicating it with a linguistic intervention reminiscent of Tutuola's introduction of pounds and shillings:

There we saw the creatures that we called 'Drum, Song and Dance' personally and these three creatures were living creatures as ours. At the same time we reached there the half-bodied baby came down from my head, then we thanked God. But as he came down from my head he joined the three creatures at once. When 'Drum' started to beat himself it was just as if he was beaten by fifty men, when 'Song' started to sing, it was just as if a hundred people were singing together and when 'Dance' started to dance the half-bodied baby started too, my wife, myself and spirits, etc., were dancing with 'Dance' and nobody who heard or saw these three

⁵⁴⁶ Tutuola, 21.

⁵⁴⁷ Afolayan, 203.

fellows would not follow them to wherever they were going. Then the whole of us were following the three fellows and dancing along with them.⁵⁴⁸

Though the creatures' personification and account of their abilities fall within the synecdochic pattern of expression and representation with regards to spirits, the inclusion of 'God' complicates this arrangement. It clearly does not refer to the pantheon of local deities present in the novel, all of whom are denoted by a lower-case 'g,' as in 'Father of the gods.' Instead, it suggests the presence of Christian practice and ceremony — a marked departure from the Yoruba sprites that otherwise inhabit the text. Similarly, Faithful-Mother's white tree is fitted with a hospital and visitors are attended to by waiters; the narrator uses a gun to dispatch the demonic red-fish and describes the spirit as having a head 'just like a tortoise's head, but [...] as big as an elephant's head [with] over 30 horns [...] spread out as an umbrella'⁵⁴⁹; magical bush-creatures steal crops, leaving farms 'as flat as a football field.'⁵⁵⁰ As in the case of the airplanes and cigarettes, the symbolic structure the supernatural world is suddenly cast as an exchange of difference with the introduction of western points of reference.

Though Yoruba and English linguistic consciousnesses are pushed together in Tutuola's novel, they clearly do not resolve into a cohesive composite. Consider the narrator's encounter with the Wise-King:

⁵⁴⁸ Tutuola, 38.

⁵⁴⁹ Tutuola, 79.

⁵⁵⁰ Tutuola, 89.

When it was early in the morning, the attendants washed us and dressed us with costly clothes and dressed the horse as well. Then we mounted the horse. After that they were following us about in the town, they were beating drums, dancing and singing the song of mourning for six days, but when it was early on the 7th day's morning that we should be killed and they (attendants) were taking us around the town for the last time, we reached the centre of the town, and there we saw the right man who killed the prince and told us to carry him (prince) to that town [...] after we had spent 15 days in that town, then we told the king that we wanted to continue our journey to the Deads' Town, and he gave us presents and told us the shortest way to the Deads' Town.⁵⁵¹

Overloaded with conjunctions, the passage's uneven episodic structure outwardly betrays a lack of design, serving solely as means to nudge the plot forward. Running counter to literary convention, the repetition of 'us,' 'horse,' 'town' and 'day' is clumsy and superfluous; the bracketed explanations belie awkward pronoun choice and placement. In context of the underlying intra-textual conversation between expression and representation, however, it becomes apparent that there are two distinct narrative voices at work. For example, Yoruba uses one word for third-person singular pronouns, so what comes across as grammatical confusion is simply a careful delineation of who is doing what.

⁵⁵¹ Tutuola, 94-95.

Conclusions

Despite their dissimilar narratives, Desani and Tutuola's texts engage with much of the same conceptual territory. The novels' hybrid sensibility is underwritten by intercultural dialogism, negotiating *Hatterr's* scraps of eastern and western cultural knowledge, and *Drinkard's* interlingual play. These encounters are framed by a broader global network of cultural experience and exchange both within the text and without — Desani's gathering of European cultural knowledge in pre- and postwar England, and Tutuola's self-taught second language.

The novels' attitude toward the global and local is framed by their respective narrative outlooks. Desani's comic opera is inward-looking; a surreal meditation on an intrusive and ever-encroaching outside world. Alternatively, Tutuola's adapted folktale looks ever-outward, as whimsical asides about football pitches and cigarettes disrupt his carefully-plotted fantasy. Tutuola incorporates these encounters into his narrative while the character of Hatterr internalizes and inhabits them through performance. For H. Hatterr, hybrid identification is the only path to autonomy and self-realization — neither fully European nor Indian, he maneuvers through in-between spaces, claiming them as his own. Similarly, *Drinkard's* linguistic construction a performance of language emerges from within a fluid and adaptable in-between position. Subjectivity and identity is inextricably linked to the collision of cultural values and signifiers within Tutuola's inter-language.

Language and subjectivity in both *Drinkard* and *Hatterr* are sites of transculturation, where this collision of cultural information precipitates a constant reconfiguration and

realignment of self and identity. Transculturation, or ‘the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds in colonies and metropolises,’⁵⁵² is the theoretical vehicle that propels both texts’ frenetic linguistic back-and-forth. Diana Taylor’s remarks in ‘Transculturating Transculturation’ speak to the broader characteristics of the transcultured voice:

The indigenous elements with which we deal today are not those that existed before the clash [between native peoples and their conquerors] but those that came into being as a result of it. What we have, then, is a complex configuration of cultural elements that looks somewhat recognizable. Yet, in fact, this hybrid product is also foreign, culturally specific and ‘original.’⁵⁵³

In both *Hatterr* and *Drinkard*, language is ‘estranged’⁵⁵⁴ and made unfamiliar through frequent intercultural narrative interventions and an emphasis on linguistic bricolage. The novels use language to fashion and move between these cultural spaces, producing a text that may be ‘somewhat recognizable’ through stylistic and contextual cues, but is simultaneously linguistically ‘foreign.’ One particularly ambitious passage in *Hatterr*, for instance, incorporates words and phrases borrowed from eleven different languages: English, Latin, Italian, French, German, Russian, Hungarian, Urdu, Spanish, Japanese, and Maori.⁵⁵⁵ *Drinkard*’s sudden invocation of pounds and shillings, cigarettes, telephones and

⁵⁵² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 213.

⁵⁵³ Diana Taylor, ‘Transculturating Transculturation,’ *Performing Arts Journal* 13 (1991), 90-104 (p. 97).

⁵⁵⁴ Bhabha, 113.

⁵⁵⁵ ‘If you try any tricks,’ I told the feller, in the uncontrollable trumpet-voluntary hysteria high-note, ‘by the Count of Monte Cristo, I will sue you, do you hear? I will set the law on

air travel within a Yoruba narrative space is similarly dislocating and disorienting for readers.

As Ramanujan notes, *Hatterr* 'is not merely a reflection of the political under-tow of empire; it reflects the worldview of the twentieth century which is essentially postdualistic'⁵⁵⁶ — a global perspective. Tutuola's use of language in *Drinkard* is similarly 'postdualistic' in the sense that he proposes a system of expression that is neither wholly Nigerian nor wholly British-European, but instead something in between. Both texts' jarring linguistic *mélange*, with words colliding in unusual and unfamiliar combinations across dialects and idiom, demonstrate how cultural signals may be deployed without requiring they fit together into a homogenous or essential structure. In *Hatterr*, Desani applies the ideas of difference and distance to explore what identity represents even as one of its primary markers, language, is subjected to relentless slippage and transformation. In *Drinkard*, Tutuola illustrates how language can itself come to represent and constitute hybrid selves and subjectivities. Novels like *All About H. Hatterr* and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* engage intercultural linguistic experimentation not to "mediate' between one culture and the other, but show in what ways they come together as new, hybrid cultural realities.'⁵⁵⁷

you [...] Well, nil desperandum, old dear! Here's mud in yer eye! Here's skin orf yer nose! *Chin, chin*, me china! Bottoms, *up*! Phooey, old feller! Have a raspberry! Play days, pal! Some papillote paper? Or would you prefer Unter den Linden? Maul a moll, Govinda! [...] Kazét csokóloom, Widow Jones! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!' [...] Makes you feel like quitting, sort of salaams! adios! sayonara! all the best und auf Widersehn, eh feller? Kia ora! Too right! Give it to you straight in Magya, shall I, amico mio? Apám, Apám, Nem értesz édes Apa? Aloha ee!' (p. 184)

⁵⁵⁶ Ramanujan, 29.

⁵⁵⁷ Sherry Simon, Introduction to *Changing the Terms: Translating the Postcolonial Era*, ed. by Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000), 9-32 (p. 23).

Chapter 5: Talking Back — The Uncertain Self and Counter-Narratives in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006)

*I was eager to try coffee. You see, poor people in the north of this country drink tea, and poor people in the south drink coffee [...] But before you could drink it, you had to know how to drink it [...] For a while I only watched.*⁵⁵⁸

Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger*

*We were living proof of the benefits that would accrue to the land if only we were made equal [...] I wondered, was I Rhodesian, if I could not sit on Rhodesian seats, read formulae from a Rhodesian blackboard and press down upon Rhodesian desks?*⁵⁵⁹

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*

Unlike the texts discussed in previous chapters, Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) are not especially concerned with the recovery and preservation of cultural knowledge and memory. Indeed, both novels conclude with the dismantling of these romantic notions in anticipation of new, unknown, national mythologies. Emerging from within contemporary modernity, the texts' realist first-person narratives critique the legacies of postcolonialism through the lens of the

⁵⁵⁸ Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 296.

⁵⁵⁹ Tsitsi Dangarembga, *The Book of Not* (London: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Ltd, 2006), 152-153.

Other, re-presenting local Indian and Zimbabwean realities from a perspective of social and cultural alterity.

The White Tiger and *The Book of Not*'s plots pivot on adversarial encounters between self and community, individual and collective experience, the 'me' and 'them' coded into identity and alterity. Adiga's Balram objects to the social and economic inequality perpetuated by moneyed Indian elites, refusing to attribute this concentration of power and wealth solely to the effects of British colonialism: 'In 1947 the British left, but only a moron would think that we became free then.'⁵⁶⁰ Dangarembga's Tambu struggles with Rhodesian racism, but is buoyed by her abiding faith in socio-economic meritocracy, regardless of race or skin colour: 'I felt [...] I was on a direct route to a future so bright it [...] would light up more than my community [...] There I was, a student at the prestigious private school in the country.'⁵⁶¹ These confrontations find resolution in their characters' climactic realizations of self: Balram enacts cold-blooded violence against middle-class Indian cosmopolitan entitlement; Tambu strains to find her place within colonial Rhodesia's stratified social structure through quiet diligence.

Within their respective narrative structures, the novels explore the marginalized self's potential agency under oppressive discourses legitimized by socially, politically and economically dominant communities. This chapter examines the conflict between self and these discourses in *The White Tiger* and *The Book of Not* through two related critical contexts: 1) dialogical self theory's notion of 'uncertainty,' which engenders new self

⁵⁶⁰ Adiga, 22.

⁵⁶¹ Dangarembga, 82.

positions through an engagement with unpredictability, and 2) the idea of 'liquid modernity,' which emphasizes the role of individual choice in adopting these new positions. Following a critical overview of uncertainty and liquid modernity, this chapter's textual analysis illustrates how Balram and Tambu are each put in a position to carve out identities independent of the social roles, obligations and expectations foisted upon them by the social prevailing order. Balram reinvents himself as entrepreneur Ashok Sharma, the White Tiger, while Tambu overcomes a profound sense of racial inferiority and seeks opportunity in a newly independent Zimbabwe.

The Experience of Uncertainty: Journeys into the Unknown

Hermans and Hermans-Konopka suggest uncertainty is an inescapable facet of self under globalization, where vast networks of interrelationships act upon one another and 'the number of economic, ecological, demographical, political, and social linkages is greater than in any previous time in history.'⁵⁶² They set the critical parameters of this discussion in *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society*, describing four key ways in which uncertainty is experienced:

- (i) complexity, referring to a great number of parts that have a large variety of relations; (ii) ambiguity, referring to a suspension of clarity, as the meaning of one part is determined by the flux and variation of the other parts; (iii) deficit

⁵⁶² Hubert Hermans and Agnieszka Hermans-Konopka, *Dialogical Self Theory: Positioning and Counter-Positioning in a Globalizing Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

knowledge, referring to the absence of a superordinate knowledge structure that can resolve the contradictions between the parts; and (iv) unpredictability, implying a lack of control of future developments. We assume that the experience of uncertainty characterizes a global situation of multi-voicedness (complexity) that does not allow a fixation of meaning (ambiguity), that has no superordinate voice for resolving contradictions and conflicting information (deficit knowledge), and that is to a large extent unpredictable.⁵⁶³

In accounting for both the present conditions of self and the potential reconfiguration of these conditions into new positions, uncertainty represents the self's dialogue with 'a range of possibilities.'⁵⁶⁴

The idea of transnational capital as represented by wealth and poverty in *The White Tiger*, for instance, is 'complex' insofar as it invokes innumerable interconnected relationships. When Balram initially encounters capital, he unknowingly engages entire histories of European and South Asian economics, class, colonial exploitation, the organization of labour, among countless other considerations. Ambiguity is evident at the novel's outset, where Balram demonstrates an awareness of what money represents — access, comfort, education, social status — but is unable to relate the conditions of wealth to these broader discursive threads:

See: Halwai, my name, means 'sweet-maker.' That's my caste—my destiny.

⁵⁶³ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 27-28.

⁵⁶⁴ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 46.

But if we were Halwais, then why was my father not making sweets but pulling a rickshaw? Why did I grow up breaking coals and wiping tables, instead of eating *gulab jamuns* and sweet pastries when and where I chose to? Why was I lean and dark and cunning, and not fat and creamy-skinned and smiling, like a boy raised on sweets would be?⁵⁶⁵

Lacking a superordinate frame of reference, he is unable to resolve the contradictions in how the distribution of capital simultaneously creates immense wealth and crushing poverty. These circumstances set in motion the unpredictable chain of events that eventually lead Balram to murder his employer, steal his money and enter the free market as a self-styled entrepreneur. As Snehal Shingavi observes, 'Balram's rise into the ranks of the entrepreneurial class in Bangalore depends not only on the death of his immediate exploiter; it requires the severing of all ties to the kinship networks that in the novel cannibalize the poor'⁵⁶⁶ — reconfiguring the potential positions of self in relation to these networks.

Similarly, Tambu's attempts to conceptualize cultural belonging in *The Book of Not* are intertwined with histories of internecine conflict within her ethnic community, wars of liberation, colonial alterity, cultural exclusion and the principles of her Christian faith. Uncertainty is amplified by the ambiguity of these positions as they relate to each other, leaving Tambu to agonize over whether her sense of Christian duty permits her to support

⁵⁶⁵ Adiga, 63.

⁵⁶⁶ Snehal Shingavi, 'Capitalism, Caste, and Con-Games in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*,' *Postcolonial Text* 9.3 (2014), 1-16 (p. 9).

her countrymen's struggle for liberation, for example. Elsewhere, she describes this sense of cultural dislocation and disorientation in her interactions with fellow Rhodesians:

In the combi [...] these daydreams of a better future [...] could not ward off more aggravation. The vehicle's windows were jammed. The air smelt of sweating, barely-washed bodies [...] Sweat seeped out under my arms in dark noxious stains into the synthetic material of my blouse [...] It was harrowing to be part of such undistinguished humanity.⁵⁶⁷

Looking to her family, teachers, friends and colleagues for direction, she realizes that their guidance is insufficient and inadequate. Unlike Balram, whose movement through uncertainty leads to the creation of 'Ashok Sharma, the White Tiger of Bangalore,' Tambu resists engaging the unknown until the very end of the novel, where she resolves to forge a new self and identity in Zimbabwe. As Hermans and Hermans-Konopka remark, 'the experience of uncertainty can be a gift as it opens a broad range of unexpected possibilities, but a burden in so far as it leads to confusion and anxiety.'⁵⁶⁸

Balram and Tambu's journeys into uncertainty in *The White Tiger* and *The Book of Not* represent a negotiation between the conditions and position of self. The *conditions* of self are the external 'economic, ecological, demographical, political, and social'⁵⁶⁹ structures that situate the characters within a context of alterity — Balram as an unskilled low-caste worker and Tambu as an outsider among both blacks and whites in her own country. The

⁵⁶⁷ Dangarembga, 211.

⁵⁶⁸ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 28.

⁵⁶⁹ Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 27.

position of self refers to Balram and Tambu's attempts to re-situate themselves within this framework, articulating their own sense of self rather than having it dictated to them. In the texts, this is expressed through the choices the characters make as they confront uncertain futures, moving through different realms of social experience and knowledge.

Liquid Modernity: Moving Through Cultural Spaces

Zygmunt Bauman describes 'liquid modernity' as the dissolution of 'the bonds which interlock individual choices in collective projects and actions [...] between individually conducted life policies [and] political actions of human collectivities.'⁵⁷⁰ Suggesting that the malleability of self and the individual is a crucial fact of modern life, he writes,

It is individual men and women on their own who are expected to use, individually, their own wits, resources and industry to lift themselves to a more satisfactory condition and leave behind whatever aspect of their present condition they may resent.'⁵⁷¹

Ways of life today drift in varied and not necessarily coordinated directions; they come into contact and separate, they approach and distance themselves from one another, embrace and repel, enter into conflict, or initiate a mutual exchange of experience or services — and they do all this [...] floating in a suspension of cultures [...] Supposedly stable and unquestionable hierarchies and one-directional

⁵⁷⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 6.

⁵⁷¹ Bauman, 135.

evolutionary pathways are today replaced by the contentions for the permission to be different.⁵⁷²

In the novels, Balram and Tambu move uncertainly through different social and cultural worlds made accessible through the 'liquefaction' of their boundaries in order to explore the possibilities of recovering self and agency.

This renewed sense of social mobility is at the root of Balram's gradual agency as he graduates from sullen schoolchild to tea stall lackey to affable chauffeur and finally world-class entrepreneur. Relying on his 'wits, resources and industry,' he lies, cheats, and kills his way to a comfortable middle-class existence, fulfilling a promise in the novel's opening chapter, 'even as a boy, I could see what was beautiful in the world: I was destined to not stay a slave.'⁵⁷³ Adiga's narrative strategies first establish a sense of sunny middle-class entitlement and then deflate this spirit of aspirational cosmopolitanism by unexpectedly mapping its discursive sensibilities upon the disadvantaged underclass. Adopting what sociologists Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller describe as the Indian middle class's 'liberal ethos of opportunity and mobility'⁵⁷⁴ for himself, Balram challenges the 'hierarchies and exclusions that anchor its class position'⁵⁷⁵ and establishes himself as one of their

⁵⁷² Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 37-8.

⁵⁷³ Adiga, 41.

⁵⁷⁴ Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller, 'Hegemonic Aspirations: New Middle Class Politics and India's Democracy in Comparative Perspective,' *Critical Asian Studies*, 38:4 (2006), 495-522 (p. 501).

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

number, remarking, 'to break the law of his land — to turn bad news into good news — is the entrepreneur's prerogative.'⁵⁷⁶

The Book of Not addresses similar issues of mobility and agency, but its protagonist remains ambivalent towards challenging the cultural structures and institutions that perpetuate her marginalization. Remarking on Tambu's reticence in this regard, Rosanne Kennedy writes,

This is a novel of 'unbecoming' — of the loss of identity, feeling, and attachments. Despite her concentrated efforts to exercise agency over her life, Tambu is repeatedly thwarted: by the psychic damage she sustains as a result of internalizing a Eurocentric view of her African 'inferiority'⁵⁷⁷

Tambu's understanding of racial consciousness, dislocation and belonging is shaped by her movement through different cultural contexts, from Rhodesian village to Christian missionary school, the suburbs of Mabvuku and Greendale to Harare. Each locale proposes a conflicting sets of values and priorities: Tambu's aunt and uncle in the village support the stability of colonial social relations, even as her sister joins the struggle for liberation against the government; Sacred Heart promises to mold her into 'a young woman with a future,'⁵⁷⁸ but her commitment and diligence is betrayed when an undeserving white student is awarded a school prize ahead of her⁵⁷⁹; she thinks she is finally being 'recognised

⁵⁷⁶ Adiga, 38.

⁵⁷⁷ Rosanne Kennedy, 'Mortgaged Futures: Trauma, Subjectivity, and the Legacies of Colonialism in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*,' *Studies in the Novel* 40.1/2 (2008), 86-107 (p. 89).

⁵⁷⁸ Dangarembga, 11.

⁵⁷⁹ Dangarembga, 162-164.

as a result of my own resources [by using] what I had been given to take into the world to achieve a work of merit'⁵⁸⁰ at a Harare-based advertising agency, but her white colleague steals her work and wins the accolades owed to her. Tambu's inability to lift herself 'to a more satisfactory condition' is rooted in both a failure to link the causes of her mistreatment to broader social systems of oppression and an unwillingness to confront them.

The following sections examine how *The White Tiger* and *The Book of Not* approach these ideas of self and agency in context of uncertainty and liquid modernity through Adiga and Dangarembga's narrative strategies, opening with brief biographies of the authors and a review of the texts' publication details and critical reception.

My analysis of *White Tiger* illustrates 1) how Adiga employs and subverts the logic of the 'India Shining' tourist campaign in order to highlight systems of inequality, 2) his use of fragmentary and dislocated experience to engender agency and elide oppositional difference and subjectivity, and 3) how the marginalized self is written into national historiographies. My critique of Dangarembga's novel addresses how *The Book of Not* employs the ideas of experience and identity in order to 1) mark its protagonist's passage from passive victimhood into agency, 2) investigate how alterity might serve as an expression of self, and 3) explore how cultural identity is made accessible to marginalized voices.

⁵⁸⁰ Dangarembga, 234.

Framing Aravind Adiga (1974—) and *The White Tiger*

Aravind Adiga was born in Madras in 1974 and raised in the Karnatakan capital Mangalore, attending the prestigious Jesuit academy St. Aloysius College until his mother's death in 1991,⁵⁸¹ whereupon his father resettled the family in Sydney. On completing his studies at a selective agricultural high school, Adiga pursued a degree in English Literature at Columbia University, graduating in the summer of 1997. Awarded a scholarship from Oxford's Magdalen College, he spent the following two years completing a Master's degree in literature, followed by an internship at *The Financial Times*. Adiga moved back to India in 2003, spending two years working as *TIME* magazine's South Asian correspondent and then operating as a freelance journalist. A draft of *The White Tiger*, his first novel, was originally completed in 2005, and then rewritten over December 2006 and January 2007 — Adiga's literary representatives at the William Morris Agency 'whipped up competition among eight rival publishers before [brokering a] deal with Atlantic Books at the 2007 London Book Fair. Atlantic paid the 34-year-old Indian author one of its biggest-ever advances for fiction.'⁵⁸² Since winning the Man Booker Prize for *White Tiger*, Mumbai-based Adiga has published a series of short stories collected in *Between the Assassinations* (2008) and a novel, *Last Man in Tower* (2011), which revisits the themes of power, inequality and poverty introduced in his literary debut.

Despite its Booker Prize success, critical responses to *The White Tiger* have been mixed. Reviewing the novel for the *New York Times*, Akash Kapur concludes, 'an effective

⁵⁸¹ Aravind Adiga, 'How English Literature Shaped Me,' *The Independent*, 17 July 2009.

⁵⁸² Richard Eden, 'Ambitious Booker winner Aravind Adiga sacks agent of his success,' *The Telegraph*, 25 October 2008.

polemic, perhaps, but an incomplete portrait of a nation'⁵⁸³; writing for *The Guardian*, reviewer Kevin Rushby observes, 'There is much to commend in this novel, a witty parable of India's changing society, yet there is much to ponder [...] Adiga is an interesting talent'⁵⁸⁴; in *The Sunday Times*, Adam Lively offers more effusive praise, describing the text as an 'extraordinary' and 'brilliant' rags-to-riches story⁵⁸⁵. Many Indian critics, on the other hand, were quick to pan Adiga's debut, with the Kolkata *Telegraph*'s Sankarshan Thakur devoting an article to the backlash:

Khushwant Singh's column in *The Telegraph* found it the 'darkest, one-sided picture of India'; author Manjula Padmanabhan savaged it in *Outlook* saying she found it a 'tedious, unfunny slog'; historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam labelled it 'another brick to the patronising edifice' in the *London Review of Books*; and US-based critic Amitava Kumar [...] wrote in the *Boston Review*: 'The novelist seems to know next to nothing about either the love or the despair of the people he writes about [...] Verdict: Too dishonest, a corrupted ventriloquism.'⁵⁸⁶

The most negative Indian reviews, including those offered up by Singh and Subrahmanyam, have focussed on what they hold to be inauthentic and sensationalist 'poverty porn' designed to appeal to Western audiences.⁵⁸⁷ Comparatively mild in its accounts of impoverishment when taken alongside such texts as V.S Naipaul's India trilogy — wherein

⁵⁸³ Akash Kapur, 'The Secret of His Success,' *The New York Times*, 7 November 2008.

⁵⁸⁴ Kevin Rushby, 'Review: *The White Tiger*,' *The Guardian*, 15 October 2008.

⁵⁸⁵ Adam Lively, '*The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga,' *The Sunday Times*, 6 April 2008.

⁵⁸⁶ Sankarshan Thakur, 'The Hero India Doesn't Want,' *The Telegraph*, 16 November 2008.

⁵⁸⁷ Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Routledge, 2001) argues that the Booker Prize has historically upheld the 'fetishization of cultural otherness' (111) through 'Anglocentric [...] benevolent paternalism' (ibid).

the author infamously described India as ‘the world’s largest slum’⁵⁸⁸ and Indians as ‘a withered race’⁵⁸⁹ — Adiga attacks the systems of power that bring about these conditions of inequality through his protagonist, a victim of broad institutional failure. He expands on this idea in a 2008 interview with the New York-based magazine *India Abroad*:

Some people may say that this is book very negative about India, and some may say that you received good reviews in the West because the book focuses on poverty and social ills in the country. This is a book that makes a passionate case for the better treatment of two-thirds of [all Indians] who are poorer. It is an attack on the system that governs India.⁵⁹⁰

Framed as an epistolary autobiography addressed to then-Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, *The White Tiger*’s Balram describes his life story as a triumphant exemplar of modern Indian industry, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. ‘When you have heard the story of how I got to Bangalore and became one of its most successful (though probably least known) businessmen,’ Balram writes to the Chinese leader, ‘you will know everything there is to know about how entrepreneurship is born, nurtured and developed in this, the glorious twenty-first century of man. The century, more specifically, of the *yellow* and the *brown* man. You and me.’⁵⁹¹ A low-caste Bihari, Balram is pulled out of school after his father’s death and put to work in a teashop ‘smashing coals’ and ‘wiping tables.’⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness: His Discovery of India* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 173.

⁵⁸⁹ Naipaul, 243.

⁵⁹⁰ Arthur Pais, ‘Dangers of Ignoring India’s Poor are Greater: Aravind Adiga,’ *India Abroad*, 2 May 2008.

⁵⁹¹ Adiga, *The White Tiger*, 6-7.

⁵⁹² Adiga, 38.

Eventually, he bluffs his way into a job as chauffeur for Mr. Ashok, a local landlord's son, and is soon relocated to Gurgaon in suburban New Delhi. His moment of victory over the corrupt and exploitative social structures and state institutions that perpetuate inequality and oppression arrives when he bludgeons Ashok to death and absconds with a bag of cash. Hastily relocating to Bangalore, Balram pays off the local authorities, establishes a taxi business with the stolen money, and renames himself Ashok Sharma, The White Tiger of Bangalore:

At [some] times, I gloat that Mr Ashok's family can put up a reward of a million dollars on my head, and it will not matter. I have switched sides: I am now one of those people who cannot be caught in India [...] I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a *minute*, what it means not to be a servant.⁵⁹³

Darkness and India Shining

First appearing in print six years after India's Ministry of Tourism launched its 'Incredible India' campaign, and four years after the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government commissioned the slogan 'India Shining' in a bid to attract foreign investment, Adiga's *White Tiger* counters, 'I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness.'⁵⁹⁴ Adiga expands on this sentiment in his interview with *India Abroad*, saying, 'I would argue that today, in India, amidst the hoopla and hype of the economic boom, the poor are more

⁵⁹³ Adiga, 320-31.

⁵⁹⁴ Adiga, 14.

invisible than ever before, and the dangers of ignoring them are greater than ever before.⁵⁹⁵ Balram's movement into 'the Light' is enacted through a violent and grisly rejection of oppressive 'Darkness.'

Indeed, *The White Tiger* often reads as a grimy inversion of India Shining's sanitized branding materials — Balram's opening salvo, for example, takes stock of the local realities in his Bihari village:

Electricity poles — defunct.

Water tap — broken.

Children — too lean and short for their age, and with oversized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India.

Yes, a typical Indian village paradise [...] down the middle of the main road, families of pigs are sniffing through sewage — the upper body of each animal is dry, with long hairs that are matted together into spines; the lower half of the body is peat-black and glistening from sewage.⁵⁹⁶

This deliberate putrefaction of the self-sufficient Gandhian village idyll, symbol of democracy and administrative decentralization, grounds global aspirations firmly in local realities. In Balram's India, deeply ingrained feudalism collides with modernity — the entrepreneurial ambition of India's new middle class and its systemic oppression of the poor, of impoverished rickshaw-pullers and their cargo of 'middle-class flesh — some fat

⁵⁹⁵ Pais.

⁵⁹⁶ Adiga, 19-20.

man with his fat wife and all their shopping bags and groceries.’⁵⁹⁷ *White Tiger* is an unsubtle attack on the narratives that underpin India Shining, a subversive tour of the ‘incurable communal prejudices, the inexorable march of free-market capital, migration of labour from village to cramped industrial centres, extreme inequality between the classes, the chicanery of the so-called leaders of the people’⁵⁹⁸ led by the forgotten poor.

As Fernandes and Heller note,

[India’s] middle class, and in particular the dominant fraction of the middle class, plays a central role in the politics of hegemony. [...] as attempts to coordinate the interests of the dominant classes and to forge internal unity within the highly diverse fragments of the middle class [...] these projects have been marked by middle class illiberalism, and most notably a distancing from lower classes.⁵⁹⁹

The authors refer here to the anti-Muslim and anti-secular Hindu nationalist movement, Hindutva — a useful political instrument employed in an effort to unify middle-class Hindu constituencies through ideologies of exclusion. Adiga’s narrator re-situates this endorsement of exclusion in terms of capital, those who have accumulated wealth and those left behind: ‘to sum up — in the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with

⁵⁹⁷ Adiga, 27.

⁵⁹⁸ Ankhi Mukherjee, ‘Yes, Sir, I Was the One Who Got Away: Postcolonial Emergence and the Question of Global English,’ *Études Anglaises*, 62.3 (2009), 280-291 (p. 282).

⁵⁹⁹ Leela Fernandes and Patrick Heller, ‘Hegemonic Aspirations: New Middle Class Politics and India’s Democracy in Comparative Perspective,’ *Critical Asian Studies*, 38:4 (2006), 495- 522 (p. 496).

Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat — or get eaten up.’⁶⁰⁰ *The White Tiger’s* framework of opposition, coded as difference between collectivities — rich and poor, empowered and powerless, middle-class and underclass — double as opportunities for the expression of self amidst this uncertainty. Through Balram, Adiga insinuates the consequences of class antagonism and entrenched socio-economic inequality in era of fluid modernity. Equal parts threatening and self-congratulatory, Balram warns, ‘I am tomorrow.’⁶⁰¹

Fragments, Difference and Histories

Balram’s engagement with the social and political systems that surround him engender a sense of self constituted of fragmentary and dislocated experiences. For example: Balram describes Buckingham Towers, the ‘shiny and new’⁶⁰² apartment block where Ashok and his wife reside in a flat outfitted with ‘soft, white, sofas’⁶⁰³, then outlines the squalid conditions of the servants’ basement dormitory housed in the same building: ‘the wall was covered with cockroaches which had come to feed on the minerals or the limestone in the plaster; their chewing made a continuous noise, and their antennae trembled from every spot on the wall.’⁶⁰⁴ Sensitive to the disconnection between these experiences, Balram keenly notes ‘the architectural sublime of industrializing India juxtaposed with slums (where the construction workers live), Johnnie Walker whisky and whisky third class

⁶⁰⁰ Adiga, 64.

⁶⁰¹ Adiga, 6.

⁶⁰² Adiga, 128.

⁶⁰³ Adiga, 129.

⁶⁰⁴ Adiga, 131.

(‘English’ liquor men and ‘Indian’ liquor men) [...] real blonde prostitutes for rich punters and counterfeit blondes for the less privileged.’⁶⁰⁵

These fragments of dehumanizing experience, first-hand encounters with the material effects of disparity and inequality, are reflected in his growing desperation to escape institutionalized exploitation and humiliation. On witnessing a servant refused entry into a mall because of his sandals, Balram reacts with uncharacteristic sentimentality, seizing on the fragmented image of toothpaste as a middle-class artifact:

I bought my first toothpaste that night. I got it from the man who usually sold me *paan*; he had a side business in toothpastes that cancelled out the effects of *paan* [...] As I brushed my teeth with my finger, I noticed what my left hand was doing: it had crawled up to my groin without my noticing — the way a lizard goes stealthily up a wall — and was about to scratch.

I waited. The moment it moved, I seized it with the right hand [...] In my mouth, the toothpaste had thickened into a milky foam; it began dripping down the sides of my lips. I spat it out.

Brush. Brush. Spit.

Why had my father never told me not to scratch my groin? Why had my father never taught me to brush my teeth in milky foam? Why had he raised me to live like an animal? Why do all the poor live amid such filth, such ugliness?

⁶⁰⁵ Mukherjee, 282.

Brush. Brush. Spit.

Brush. Brush. Spit.

If only a man could spit his past out so easily.⁶⁰⁶

This seemingly innocuous reference to toothpaste and tooth brushing is laden with tremendous symbolic value: as a marker of class, as an instrument of cleanliness and hygiene, as a means of replacing ugliness with beauty. Significantly, Balram purchases the tube not out of concern for dental health, but as a totem bidding entry into the world of middle-class respectability. The excerpt places Balram's dissatisfaction with the present and past alongside his longing to breaking free from the margins of society, marking a turning point in *White Tiger's* narrative. The following day, wearing the t-shirt and black shoes he had purchased in addition to the toothpaste, Balram discreetly slips into the mall and spends some time examining the storefronts, remarking, 'it was my first taste of the fugitive's life.'⁶⁰⁷ Though this gesture offers a fragmentary experience of existence outside alterity, it represents a deliberate disturbance of prevailing social discourse and the assertion of self in a hostile, exclusionary, environment. In this manner, fragmented and dislocated images of wealth and poverty, privilege and disenfranchisement, come to serve as the impetus for action.

Describing his first encounter with 'the Stork,' Ashok's father, and his performance of servile degradation in order to secure employment with the clan, Balram writes,

⁶⁰⁶ Adiga, 150-1.

⁶⁰⁷ Adiga, 152.

You should have seen me that day — what a performance of wails and kisses and tears! You'd think I'd been born into a caste of performing actors! And all the time, while clutching the Stork's feet, I was staring at his huge, dirty, uncut toenails and thinking, *What is he doing in Dhanbad? Why isn't he back home, screwing poor fishermen of their money and humping their daughters?*⁶⁰⁸

The points of oppositional difference incorporated in this passage include caste, class, feudalism, and locale; Balram immediately recognizes the perfunctory social cues required of him as a low-caste member of the underclass on a *zamindaar's* compound and commits whole-heartedly to the insincere charade of self-abasement. The absurdity of the situation is reflected in the lightness of his tone and pervading sense of incredulity. Drawing attention to the essentially utilitarian and functional aspect of his performance, Balram juxtaposes this image of subservient simpering with a caustic reference to the Stork's treatment of his workers. From this interlinked series of differences, and Balram's snide commentary, emerges an explicit critique of feudal subjugation from the perspective of the marginalized peasant class: the madness and absurdity of the working poor begging to be further exploited.

This issue of perspective is closely related to the revision and re-writing of postcolonial historiographies endorsed by such state-sponsored campaigns as India Shining, which marry 'the seemingly contradictory impulses of exclusionary nationalism and globalization [...] by affirming the essential and inviolate character of Indian

⁶⁰⁸ Adiga, 61.

civilization.’⁶⁰⁹ *The White Tiger* subverts this notion of essentialist Indian history by exposing the mechanisms of social stratification and proposing that the experience of India’s disenfranchised poor operates within a divergent historical framework.

Throughout the text, Balram is quick to offer counterpoints to the stage-managed normativity of malls, gated residences, and ambitious development projects by reiterating their proximity to the squalor reserved for the most impoverished of the subproletariat. On venturing behind a shopping centre during an early morning walk, Balram writes,

I was at the slum [...] all these construction workers who were building the malls and giant apartment buildings lived here [...] they were defecating in the open like a defensive wall in front of the slum: making a line that no respectable human should cross [...] these people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets, and partitioned into lanes by lines of sewage.⁶¹⁰

Regardless of his personal aspirations to raise himself out of poverty and join India’s entrepreneurial elite, Balram makes clear that these worlds represent two distinct experiences of an India irreparably divided along social and economic lines — ‘a rich man’s body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. *Ours* are different. My father’s spine was a knotted rope [...] the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog’s collar; cuts and nicks and scars [...] the story of a poor man’s life is written on his body, in a sharp pen.’⁶¹¹ He presents his own story, the *White Tiger*’s autobiographical

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Adiga, 260.

⁶¹¹ Adiga, 27.

epistles to Wen Jiabao, as both a history of the marginalized subject in postcolonial Indian modernity and, paradoxically, as a logical, grotesque, conclusion to India Shining's economic imperatives.

Balram's resistance to discourses of dominance and alterity is accompanied by a determination to subvert and short-circuit them. He does not observe and lament or adapt and endure — instead, he pursues a way 'out of the coop'⁶¹² by whatever means necessary. The novel's climactic scene, Ashok's murder, represents the crucial expression of self and agency that releases Balram from bondage and finally allows him unhindered access to experiential and subjective autonomy.

Indeed, the text's narrative trajectory hangs shift from being acted upon to acting for himself. At the novel's outset, for instance, Balram writes,

See, my first day in school, the teacher made all the boys line up and come to his desk so he could our names down in his register. When I told him what my name was, he gaped at me:

'Munna? That's not a real name.'

He was right: it just means 'boy.'

'That's all I've got, sir,' I said.

It was true. I'd never been given a name [...]

⁶¹² Adiga, 390.

‘Well, it’s up to me, then, isn’t it? [...] We’ll call you... *Ram*. Wait — don’t we have a Ram in this class? I don’t want any confusion. It’ll be *Balram*. You know who Balram was, don’t you?’

‘No sir.’

‘He was the sidekick of the god Krishna.’⁶¹³

By the concluding chapter, he has abandoned Balram for a name of his own invention: ‘Yes, Ashok! That’s what I call myself these days. Ashok Sharma, North Indian entrepreneur, settled in Bangalore.’⁶¹⁴ While the name ‘Balram’ bears no special significance to him — in fact, it casually reinforces notions of servitude — ‘Ashok’ signals a newfound sense of empowerment and self-mastery. Passive acceptance of an identity defined by external actors is rejected in favour of the construction of an autonomous sense of self, mirroring Balram’s own journey from lowly chauffeur to wealthy entrepreneur.

Like *White Tiger*, Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* addresses issues of aspiration and escape in context of choice, self, identity and agency. The two novels climax with their protagonists facing a potentially life-altering decision — Balram must decide whether or not to follow through with his plan to kill his employer and become an ‘entrepreneur,’ Tambu must decide whether or not to claim credit for a successful advertising campaign stolen from her by a white male colleague. In both cases, Balram and Tambu must choose to subvert, escape or resist the institutions and individuals that oppress them, or substitute mere resentment for action and continue to suffer the indignities visited upon them

⁶¹³ Adiga, 13.

⁶¹⁴ Adiga, 302.

through structural inequality. Adiga and Dangarembga's texts provide valuable counterpoints to these intertwining conceits — Balram embraces his agency, while Tambu remains paralyzed with indecision.

Framing Tsitsi Dangarembga (1959—) and *The Book of Not*

Tsitsi Dangarembga was born in Mutoko, a small provincial town 150km northeast of Harare, in 1959, twenty-one years before Zimbabwe won formal independence from the United Kingdom 1980, and six years before the 1965 establishment of the white-dominated Rhodesian state. At two years old, Dangarembga moved with her family to England, where she was enrolled in primary school until the family's return to Rhodesia four years later. Recalling her early childhood in an interview with *Brick Magazine*, Dangarembga reflected on her lasting impressions of the racial attitudes she encountered in childhood:

The racism in England was not so institutionalized. Well, it was institutionalized, but then it was so efficiently realized that it didn't need institutions, if you understand what I mean [...] it was much easier not to be affected by it to that extent because my parents were students and people were somewhat respectful. Coming back [to Rhodesia] it was such a shock. Everywhere we'd been before, my parents were so well respected. But in Rhodesia, the fact that we were black meant that once we walked into that society, all of that meant nothing. It was really a blow.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁵ Madeleine Thien, 'An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga,' *Brick Magazine*, 89 (2012).

On returning to her homeland, Dangarembga attended Hartzell, a Methodist missionary school in Mutare where her father worked as headmaster and her mother taught, eventually completing her schooling at a private convent. Moving back to England in 1977 to pursue a medical degree at Cambridge, Dangarembga left her studies three years later and returned to newly independent Zimbabwe, working in advertising and taking up industrial psychology at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare.

During her time in Harare, Dangarembga became involved in the university drama club, producing a series of plays through the early 1980s including *The Lost of the Soil* (1983) and *She No Longer Weeps* (1984). During this period, she began work on the manuscript of what would become the Commonwealth Prize-winning *Nervous Conditions*. Completed in 1984, the book was rejected by a number of Zimbabwean publishers before London-based Women's Press took an interest, eventually publishing the novel in 1988. Dangarembga spent the eighteen years between *Nervous Conditions* and the publication of its sequel *The Book of Not* working as a filmmaker in Germany and in Zimbabwe, eventually moving back permanently to Harare in 2001.

The Book of Not's story picks up where *Nervous Conditions* left off, following Tambudzai Sigauke, now aged sixteen, as she leaves her village for a private convent, the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, at the height of Zimbabwe's civil war⁶¹⁶. The second entry in a planned coming-of-age trilogy, Dangarembga began work on the novel in 2000, following the tumult of Robert Mugabe's fast-tracked land reforms. The national

⁶¹⁶ Between Rhodesian forces, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army through 1964-79.

crisis sparked Dangarembga's interest in revisiting the unresolved racial and political issues framing Zimbabwe's struggle for independence: 'When the current spate of land invasions began [...] I felt I needed to go home. There I saw that some of the issues [relating to the liberation conflict] had not really been dealt with and felt, if I could find the right angle into that story, maybe it would make a useful contribution.'⁶¹⁷ Completed over the next several years, the novel was published by Women's Press in 2006 to a curiously muted reaction among literary critics.

Despite its award-winning pedigree, critical responses to *The Book of Not* have largely been limited to specialist and academic publications. The novel's three rear-cover blurbs, for instance, carry endorsements from Nana Wilson-Tagoe (a senior lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies), Terence Ranger (a former professor of race relations at Oxford, currently an emeritus fellow at St. Anthony's College), and Chris Warnes (a PhD student at Cambridge, now a lecturer at its Centre of African Studies). Additional reviews appear in *Wasafiri* and the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, the latter enthusing, 'like its prequel, *The Book of Not* is a beautiful and unique portrait of a particular time and place, conveyed through the psychological nuances of its characters.'⁶¹⁸ Writing for *The Zimbabwean*, Petina Gappah calls the text 'polished, competent, and sometimes lyrical' but tempers her praise with 'as a sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, however, the novel ultimately leaves an unshakeable dissatisfaction that one associates with stories hinted at and begun but not completed.'⁶¹⁹ In one of the few pieces to appear in Britain's

⁶¹⁷ Caroline Rooney, 'An Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga,' *Wasafiri*, 51 (2007).

⁶¹⁸ H. Margolis, Review of *The Book of Not*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 42 (2007), 578-579.

⁶¹⁹ Petina Gappah, Review of *The Book of Not*, *The Zimbabwean*, 17 August 2006.

national press, Helon Habila's review for *The Guardian* describes the novel as a 'much-anticipated sequel'⁶²⁰, summarizes its major themes, and compliments Dangarembga's historicization of Zimbabwe's racial and cultural faultlines — without offering an opinion on the text either way.

Self, Choice, Alterity — Tambu's Silence

My analysis of racial consciousness, cultural dislocation and belonging in *The Book of Not* focusses on three aspects of the text: Tambu's attempts to fashion a coherent cultural identity, her gradual movement from passivity to agency, and her journey from Rhodesian alterity and 'otherness' into community, Zimbabwe. Like *The White Tiger's* Balram, Tambu's initial submission to the prevailing social consensus is eventually replaced by a deep distrust of these structures. By the end of the novel, the teenage girl 'who had been brought up so well by [her uncle], and who wanted so much to please'⁶²¹ decides she can no longer countenance the daily humiliations of inequality and acts to remove herself from the systems that engender discrimination.

As with the oppositional framework in *White Tiger*, she defines her essential *unhu*, or personhood, in terms of discursive difference: black and white, poverty and wealth, guerilla and soldier. These divisions are underlined by an obsessive attention to wherever these differences might meet or intersect: 'the agony and fear of bumping into a white girl [...] we spent a lot of time consumed by this kind of terror. We didn't speak of it amongst

⁶²⁰ Helon Habila, 'In time of war,' *The Guardian*, 4 November 2006.

⁶²¹ Dangarembga, 55.

ourselves. It was all too humiliating, but the horror of it gnawed within us;'⁶²² 'I felt a tremor of triumph as I exposed my buttocks, imagining all the white girls doing the same. But I immediately felt guilty for having aspirations above my station. I was where I was not supposed to be;'⁶²³ 'perhaps one day I would inspire someone else to be hardworking and useful too. We could end up with a nation of inspiring, useful, hardworking people like the British and the Americans, and all the other Europeans who were guiding us and helping us in our struggle.'⁶²⁴

The cumulative effect of Tambu's negative self-definition, where self is perceived as what it is not, is a reiteration of alterity. She exists as an outsider figure, neither able to move between cultural categories nor necessarily locate herself within them. *The Book of Not* is an exercise in differentiation: Tambu is decidedly not part of her village community, grows apart from her family, is estranged from her African peers, alienated from her white schoolmates and teachers and exploited by her employer.

Tambu's reaction to the brutality of institutionalized racism is muted, even as she offers up justifications for her mistreatment. This is most readily evident as the narrative moves from village to school, where Tambu faces the local level consequences of being African within a predominantly white student body during a period of racial conflict. The crushing racial oppression of Sacred Heart is so persistent and deeply ingrained in the school's day-to-day routine that Tambu internalizes these prejudices and feels ashamed and inadequate, rarely speaking out against them. On her sister's dismemberment after

⁶²² Dangarembga, 59.

⁶²³ Dangarembga, 67.

⁶²⁴ Dangarembga, 103.

stepping on a landmine, 'I suffered secretly a sense of inferiority that came from having been at that primitive scene'⁶²⁵; on accidentally brushing her hand against her favourite teacher, 'shame came crushing down on me. I was appalled at having let my skin and this white person's touch [...] my first impression was that I had soiled my teacher in some way. I liked her and I did not want to do that. Sister should not touch me'⁶²⁶; at a prize-giving, 'the white people might assume I was one of the other girls, if I did not move in a way that persuaded them differently.'⁶²⁷ Like Balram, Tambu is profoundly conscious of her disadvantaged position within social, economic and racial systems — unlike Balram, her reaction is characterized by deferential shame rather than anger and violence.

Tambu's graduation from high school coincides with realization of Zimbabwean independence, a hopeful portent of new beginnings and possibilities. Moving to Harare and securing a job at Steers, D'Arcy and MacPedi Advertising Agency, she discovers that institutions and social orders founded on inequality and discrimination cannot be wished away by a declaration of sovereignty. The novel's coda sees Tambu quit her job after having her work stolen by a white colleague — finally, a refusal to capitulate to racism and marginalization. As she leaves her rented room in Harare after handing in her notice, Tambu thinks, 'as it was I had not considered *unhu* at all, only my own calamities, since the contested days at the convent. So this evening I walked empty to the room I would soon vacate, wondering what future there was for me, a new Zimbabwean.'⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Dangarembga, 28.

⁶²⁶ Dangarembga, 32.

⁶²⁷ Dangarembga, 110.

⁶²⁸ Dangarembga, 246.

The two primary sites of cultural identification in the novel, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, are complicated by Tambu's conflicted attitudes towards the war. While Rhodesia stands for the everyday subjugation and institutionalized prejudice she contends with at school, she nevertheless volunteers to knit comforters and gloves for government troops. Mentally weighing the moral implications of the endeavour, she rationalizes to herself, 'Put your hand up. Don't put your hand up. Do the right thing. If you do, the terrorists might find you.'⁶²⁹ She revises this reasoning further on in the text, as her resolve begins to waver:

The energy with which I slipped the stitches waned [...] I stuffed the unfinished gloves, the wool and everything in the rubbish bin in the classroom. I felt guilty and worried that now I did not care I was giving in to evil. For wasn't that a general rule known to all human beings everywhere! Love your neighbour as yourself! I am well if you are well also! But I could not anymore find a good reason to do the knitting.⁶³⁰

Significantly, this reversal follows Tambu being passed over for a school award in favour of a white girl, a painful reminder of the systematic injustices represented by the army she has volunteered to support. On the other hand, Tambu is deeply disturbed by the violence perpetrated by pro-independence militias, who she refers to as terrorists at various points throughout the text. When her friend Nyasha exhorts her to imagine an independent Zimbabwe where 'you'll be able to go into whichever toilet you like! And any school for that matter. And you won't be packed in, crowded in a stuffy dorm! You'll be treated like

⁶²⁹ Dangarembga, 132.

⁶³⁰ Dangarembga, 166.

everyone else'⁶³¹, Tambu remains cool to the idea: 'I wasn't a dreamer [...] energizing myself with what could be. I wanted to manage what was attainable. What we had was that the Rhodesians were part of the country. They wanted to fight for their right to a beautiful land.'⁶³² Though Tambu is not particularly fond of what Rhodesia represents, her ambiguous geopolitical outlook compels her to cope rather than agitate.

My close readings of the following excerpts address how these critical elements map agency and alterity over *The Book of Not's* narrative. This discussion returns to Bauman's idea that the conditions of modernity force the individual to rely upon his or her own resources⁶³³ to break away from whatever they find unsatisfactory in their lives. As I will illustrate, Tambu faces a series of choices in the text that afford her opportunities to escape the discursive bounds represented by Sacred Heart, her advertising firm, and even her family. For much of the novel, Tambu does not act and instead capitulates to the prevailing social order. As the narrative progresses, however, she inches toward the moment of self-actualization revealed on *The Book of Not's* very last page, where she finally asserts a sense of self on her own terms.

At the very beginning of the novel, Tambu describes her reaction to her sister's accident, and the sight of her severed right leg flying through the air:

In the darkness, Netsai's leg arced up. Something was required of me! I was her sister, her elder sister. I was, by that position, required to perform the act that that

⁶³¹ Dangarembga, 94.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 135.

would protect her. How miserable I was, for nothing lay in my power, so that both the powerlessness and misery frustrated [...] What I wanted was to get away.⁶³⁴

This early passage neatly encapsulates *The Book of Not's* characterization of its protagonist: Tambu's uncertain sense of responsibility, inability to act, fear of failure, despairing impotence and frustration, and a desperate desire to escape. Her exclamation 'something was required of me!' is revealing both in its implication of expectations and Tambu not knowing what exactly it is that is required of her. Her misery arises from both the tragedy that has befalls her sister and also a deep sense of personal failure owing to her inaction and 'powerlessness.' The idea of expectation and action is a constant preoccupation for Tambu throughout the novel. On being presented with a choice, she considers what the expected, appropriate, response should be before deciding on a course of action, as with her army volunteer work.

When headmistress Sister Emmanuel upbraids Tambu in front of her classmates for using the whites-only toilet, for instance, her initial instinct to stand up for herself is tempered by sober second thought:

An impulse made me stubborn as the others filed out [...] Ntombi was pushing me to move ahead. I did not budge. It had to be done. But what could be said to bring one's voice into the room, which at the same time did not annoy anyone? It was so impossible. I crumbled. I decided it was best instead to show Sister my breeding,

⁶³⁴ Dangarembga, 3.

how I would remain calm and gracious no matter what happened. 'Thank you, Sister. Good night, Sister,' I wished her politely.⁶³⁵

It becomes clear that agency is mediated by the hierarchies governing intercultural encounter and subordinated to the authority of the Europeans running the convent. Though Tambu is often inclined to react against the disgraceful degradation meted out at Sacred Heart, she instead retreats to self-abasement, 'for surely Sacred Heart could not be wrong.'⁶³⁶ Even as a classmate encourages her to challenge Sister Emmanuel for overlooking her academic achievements, Tambu sobs, 'how fearful I was that I deserved it, that I had not committed sufficiently to heart enough pages from *Romeo and Juliet* [...] I had enjoyed six months of good results and the *unhu* that accompanied it as an imposter. How afraid I was that in fact I was worth nothing.'⁶³⁷

Substituting self-flagellation for action, she is unable to mount any sort of response to these systems of discursive violence. Even as Tambu seals her letter of notice at the agency, her first move into self-actualized agency, she begins to consider again the response 'required of her':

It is true, I hesitated for a while, staring at what I had set down. What would I do now being jobless? Was it not better to cultivate by tolerance my prospects at the agency? To be trodden on was discouraging, admittedly, yet was it not a matter I had sufficient resources to come to terms with? But no and double no! [...] I

⁶³⁵ Dangarembga, 74.

⁶³⁶ Dangarembga, 163.

⁶³⁷ Dangarembga, 157.

moistened the gum of an envelop with saliva. Before I walked through the revolving doors, I slid the message with my resignation under the Managing Director's door irretrievably.⁶³⁸

It is here, on the novel's fourth-last page, that Tambu is finally able to articulate resistance to racism and marginalization. In announcing herself a 'new Zimbabwean' a few pages later, she explicitly inscribes herself into a national context that stands in opposition to the Rhodesian systems of oppression that have troubled her from the novel's outset.

Up to this point, Tambu's identity has been characterized by alterity: she is a misfit and an outsider at her school, among her peers, at her job, and has grown distant from her family. Though desperately longing to be a part of a community, she retreats inward towards almost total social isolation. She is driven to this neurotic private world, as signalled by the suffocating density of introspective reflection in the text, precisely because there are no outlets of self-expression available to her in Rhodesia, even in capitulation to colonial racism. In Zimbabwe, however, Tambu's shift from inaction into agency represents new possibilities of self at the intersection of cultural identity and racial consciousness.

Conclusion

Both *The White Tiger* and *The Book of Not* address systems of disempowerment and disenfranchisement in an uncertain global age, pitting their protagonists against socio-economic systems of exclusion imposed upon the individual and outsider. The question

⁶³⁸ Dangarembga, 243.

posed of their characters lies in how to arrive at a sense of self-definition and self-determination from an initial position of alterity and marginalization that inhibits agency.

The White Tiger's critique of exclusion and class emerges from an acute awareness of social and economic dislocation and a deep suspicion towards the unknowable instruments of social, economic and political oppression. In an era of uncertainty marked by ever-changing flows of wealth and power, Adiga refocusses attention on the marginalized subject in a blunt critique of the post-colony's failure to properly address issues of poverty and inequality. In Balram, Adiga offers a descent into the self-interested amorality of the free market.

By contrast, Tambu's inability to formulate a coherent response to these systems of exclusion in *The Book of Not* limit her ability to confront them. Not finding answers to the uncertainty of her prospects in family, school, religion or workplace, she withdraws further into herself, internalizing her resentments. Responding, for instance, to a schoolmate's question of 'what if it's a must to make choices?' between Rhodesian rebels and the army, she confusedly answers, 'I-i-ih, I'm glad I'm not them.'⁶³⁹ Tambu's narrative arc represents a movement from cultural and social isolation, where she attempts to define self in relation to cultural and social institutions, towards the realization of self derived from a rejection of these institutions.

⁶³⁹ Dangarembga, 100.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The title of this thesis, '(Re)presentations of Self in South Asian and African Anglophone Literatures' indicates a certain ambivalence towards self and identity in the texts under consideration. In these literatures, self is not necessarily related to readers as a narrative vessel for plot and exposition, but signals a process of negotiation between form, language, style and cultural politics. Through a close examination of the authors' creative literary strategies in context of the dialogical self, a self position in continuous interaction within and between cultural voices and spaces, we can begin to sketch a response to the question, 'what does self represent in these literatures?' — and outline several new strands of critical inquiry that emerge from this study.

Through dialogical reading of subjectivity and identity, we have identified several imaginings and reimaginings of self — strategically constituting a multiplicity of cultural-ethnic positions as in *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* and *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*; as a discursive means of expressing and establishing authority and expertise as in *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulu* and *Legends of the Punjab*; as a the product of intercultural linguistic mixing as in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *All About H. Hatterr*; as a site of resistance to social, political and economic hegemony and oppression as in *The Book of Not* and *The White Tiger*. This project has discussed how the dialogical self, a relational, contingent and shifting conceptualization of self and identity, may 1) engender strategic, hybrid identities, 2) be deployed as a cultural argument to shape readers' perceptions of languages, cultures and peoples, 3) articulate discourses of both marginalization and resistance.

All of the texts examined in this study articulate hybridity through the idea of self — Mahomet and Equiano through the appropriation of British-European cultural signifiers, Callaway and Temple through their translations of other peoples' stories, songs and histories, Tutuola and Desani through interlingual interplay and transactions, Adiga and Dangarembga through internalized negotiation between local and global socio-economic, political and cultural positions. Hybridity is reflected in these texts through the interaction between different cultural voices within narrative self or selves, the strategic (re)configuration of subjectivity as self moves through intercultural encounters and transactions or uncertainty.

Similarly, self also represents a cultural argument within these texts — what combinations of voices and positions are prioritized? Why are certain intercultural exchanges retained and others discarded? Equiano strategically aligning himself in the West, for instance, writing as a European observer of the foreign and exotic, and operating within European conventions of life writing, presents the specific argument of a shared humanity between all mankind, heathen African slave or Christian British gentleman. Callaway and Temple employ the authority of the expert position in an attempt to formulate, or assist in the cultivation of, new global theories on the history and development of humanity — and to improve empire's ability to effectively govern its subjects. Callaway and Temple's texts and *Drinkard* and *Hatterr* are fundamentally concerned with the application and intelligibility of language — but while Callaway and Temple attempt to institute linguistic order through the authorial voice, expert position and narrative 'flattening,' textually reproducing colonial discourses of subjectivity and representation, Tutuola and Desani's energetic and disorderly intercultural mixing of

languages and voices resist homogenization and the notion of essentialized subjectivities. Similarly, Adiga and Dangarembga argue against inequality and racial discrimination through an examination of how cultural oppression is inflicted upon individual subjectivities.

Texts like *White Tiger* and *Hatterr* resist discourses of marginalization, oppression and domination through an emphasis on the agency of self — the idea that self may be reinvented and reinvigorated to meet the demands of the moment. Balram's usurpation of Ashok to inscribe himself within the discourse of middle-class Indian entrepreneurship and respectability, for instance, or Hatterr's use of language to refashion self and resituate subjectivity between cultural poles, reiterate the creative aspects of dialogical self (re)construction. On the other hand, texts like *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* employ self in order to preserve systems of marginalization. Though their stories, songs and legends are locally sourced, and the texts themselves marked by the participation of helpful native assistants, scribes and storytellers, these voices are effectively neutered and effaced through Callaway and Temple's editorial interventions.

The critical framework of the dialogical self proves invaluable in theorizing self within literatures and texts constructed around intercultural encounter and confrontation. Self represents a negotiation between the various voices and positions made accessible through intercultural experiences, an effective and malleable literary device in both the articulation of culture, and the representation of positionality within and between cultures.

While this thesis was initially conceived of as a broad study of Anglophone literary hybridity in an age of globalization, my research gradually shifted towards conceptions of self in these literatures. The project represents one of the first sustained attempts to apply the principles of dialogical self theory to literary criticism and analysis, marking a new and original interdisciplinary intersection. The ways in which the dialogical self is assembled and represented through the very different texts considered over the previous four chapters illuminate new approaches to the discursive networks that comprise intercultural literary encounters. Situating self at the centre of my investigation allows for a rigorous interrogation of these unfolding relationships and their connections to questions of colonial knowledge and cultural memory.

The application of dialogical self theory to literary scholarship, the intersection of sociological theory and creative practice, introduces new interpretations and understandings of the links between text, author, criticism and historical contexts. Dialogical self theory illustrates, for instance, how Mahomet and Equiano's polyphonous narrative voice represents interrelated shifting I-positions and specialized cultural knowledge. Similarly, the authorial self and expert position in *Nursery Tales* and *Legends* bring readers into simultaneous conversation with nineteenth-century comparative critical frameworks and the cultural histories of Zulu and North Indian peoples. Turning to fiction, self in Tutuola and Desani's fabulist novels helps us understand how the texts' constant dialogue with local and global cultures shape their formal construction. *The Book of Not* and *The White Tiger* examine contemporary anxieties of belonging and identity in an age of entrenched global systems through the confrontation between self and these tensions.

In the absence of any substantial interdisciplinary research incorporating dialogical self theory and literary studies,⁶⁴⁰ there are a number of directions and potential paths for research and study in the field. An exploration of the dialogical self in precolonial indigenous literatures, for instance, may yield some compelling observations on the creative role of self as it relates to these particular historical and social frameworks. Likewise, an investigation framed along the lines to this project might survey colonial texts outside of the British Empire and trace the self's participation in the production of colonial knowledge in these contexts.

There remains tremendous untapped instructive value in examining how the dialogical self is constructed both through and within literary endeavour. This project has demonstrated how the self might become a focal point for a broader interrogation of the relationship between cultures within a text, and how this in turn might engender new possibilities for the expression and configuration of selfhood — to seek multitudes in contradiction, new ways of engaging with culturally discontinuous voices within literary imaginings of the self.

⁶⁴⁰ There has been some critical work incorporating literary theory within the field of cultural psychology, including Renata Zurawska-Zyla, Elzbieta Chmielnicka-Kuter and Piotr K. Oles' 'Spatial organization of the dialogical self in creative writers' (2012); Nancy J. Bell and Anindita Das' 'Emergent organization in the dialogical self: Evolution of a 'both' Ethnic Identity Position' (*Culture & Psychology* 17.2, 2011); James Cresswell and Cor Baerveldt's 'Bakhtin's realism and embodiment: Towards a Revision of the Dialogical Self' (*Culture & Psychology* 17.2, 2011) and Vincent W. Hevern's 'Threaded Identity in Cyberspace: Weblogs and Positioning in the Dialogical Self' (*Identity* 4.4, 2004).

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