

Contemporary Postcolonial Literature, Reader-Response,
and Reception Studies

Hayley Georgia Toth

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Leeds
School of English

December 2019

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Hayley Georgia Toth to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by Hayley Georgia Toth in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© 2019 University of Leeds and Hayley Georgia Toth

Acknowledgements

This thesis was supervised by Dr Brendon Nicholls. I thank Brendon for his time, energy, and insight over the course of the PhD. Thanks especially for patiently beating the passive voice into submission in my early drafts, and for working like a maniac on my behalf in the final month of this project. Thanks also for believing in me and this project, and for treating me as your colleague and equal for the past three or so years.

I must thank Jennifer Blaikie, Kate Moore, and Dr Richard Salmon for helping me to conduct a successful ethical review of the empirical component of this research. I am also grateful to Drs Frances Weightman and Sarah Dodd for offering early advice on the study of China and translation studies, and to Dr Helen Finch for kindly introducing us. Thank you to Professors John McLeod and Graham Huggan for their kindness and intellectual generosity over the years, and indeed to Professor John McLeod and Professor James Procter for reading and examining this thesis so carefully.

I am grateful to the School of English, which funded this research through the Inga-Stina Ewbank scholarship, and which provided me with opportunities for research dissemination, training, and teaching throughout this PhD. Special mentions go to Jamie Knipe, Pam Rhodes, and Tracy Ruddock for tirelessly helping me and countless others to negotiate the University's complex mechanics.

Thanks also to Adrienne Mortimer and Kate Spowage for reading (and rinsing) parts of this project at the very last minute in order to ensure that I got over the line before Christmas. Needless to say, any remaining errors are my own.

For the most part, this thesis was written in a red-brick terrace in Headingley. Thanks to the best friends, housemates and co-conspirators one could ask for – Bethan Hughes and Emma Parker – and to honorary Granbys, Dr Dom Davies and Kate Spowage. I continue to think of those times incredibly fondly – up to and including moth-gate, which thankfully grows funnier with distance. My thanks also go to the many other friends who made my PhD far more fun than it should've been, principally: Nathan Brand, Dr Frances Hemsley, Dr Rachel Johnson, Toby Jones, Stefan Kraus, Amber Lascelles, Rebecca Macklin, Maddalena Moretti, Adrienne Mortimer, and Jennifer O'Brien.

Thanks also to my parents, Julie Toth and Laszlo Toth, for having me back when the Scholarship ended, and to Jack Toth for keeping me sane (and letting me use your Netflix account for the past three years).

Final thanks are reserved for Kate Spowage, who has significantly enriched this thesis by reading my work, and by engaging in many (sometimes drunken) conversations with me about postcolonial studies. More importantly, thanks for being the most wonderful and inspiring partner for almost three years. It's been a riot, girl.

Abstract

This thesis explores the reading and reception of contemporary postcolonial literatures. It develops an innovative theory of reading postcolonial literatures, which views reading as dialectically material *and* textual, as affective, and as ethical and political. This theory democratises the reading of postcolonial literatures. It legitimises a greater variety of reading-positions as compatible with postcolonialism, as a project of contesting the material and epistemic legacies of empire. It also accounts for readings which are not postcolonial. The thesis proceeds to place this theory of reading in conversation with actual responses to contemporary postcolonial literatures, recorded in world media, critical studies, personal blogs, and the social media platforms Amazon UK and Goodreads. I focus specifically on the reception of *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2007), and *Harare North* (2009). By testing and refining my theory of reading in these three reception studies, this thesis draws three main conclusions about reading. First, reading is intrinsically hybrid, conditioned by intersecting material and textual activities. Second, reading is essentially diverse and never wholly determined in advance by material, institutional, cultural, religious, geopolitical, or national associations. Third, and finally, reading is a form of non-understanding.

This thesis therefore works against postcolonial scholars' prescription of more and more ideal readings. Its sustained theoretical and empirical engagement with actual reading in fact makes clear that postcolonialists' purported textualist or materialist reading-positions are essentially comfortable fictions that deny the hybridity of reading. This thesis also intervenes in postcolonial scholars' tendency to uncritically denigrate 'Western', 'European', or non-professional readers as incapable of reading and realising postcolonial literatures. There is no coherent 'Western' (or, for that matter, 'Muslim,' or 'Chinese,' or 'African') way of reading. Moreover, the non-professional readings considered here repeatedly demonstrate such readers' capacity for (self-)critical insight.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
ABSTRACT	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
INTRODUCTION	7
1. A THEORY OF READING POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES	18
1.1. READING AND RECEPTION IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES	19
1.2. A THEORY OF READING POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES	44
1.3. CONCLUSION	62
2. READING RESPONSES TO <i>THE SATANIC VERSES</i> (1988)	65
2.1. A CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS AFFAIR	66
2.2. AN AFFAIR OF READING	85
2.3. A NON-AFFAIR?	110
2.4. THE CASE OF PROPER LONDON	128
2.5. CONCLUSION	156
3. TRANSLATING THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN A <i>CONCISE CHINESE-ENGLISH</i> <i>DICTIONARY FOR LOVERS</i> (2008)	159
3.1. READING AS TRANSLATION	160
3.2. LANGUAGE AND THE SPATIAL ‘STANDARD’	168
3.3. A FOREIGNISING AND DOMESTICATING STRUCTURE	178
3.4. TRANSLATING THE SECOND PERSON	201
3.5. CONCLUSION	231
4. NON-UNDERSTANDING IN THE RECEPTION OF BRIAN CHIKWAVA'S <i>HARARE NORTH</i> (2009)	234
4.1. A DIFFICULT READ	235

4.2. LOSING THE PLOT	245
4.3. NON-UNDERSTANDING AND THE POSTCOLONIAL	288
4.4. CONCLUSION	301
CONCLUSION	303
REFERENCES.....	311

Introduction

This thesis is interested in the reading and reception of contemporary postcolonial literatures. As its original contribution to knowledge, it offers an innovative theory of reading postcolonial literatures. This theory of reading views reading as dialectically material *and* textual, and affective, and as generating ethical and political interfaces. By contrast with postcolonial scholars' development and advocacy of ideal reading strategies, this theory of reading seeks to describe and therefore democratise the reading of postcolonial texts. The thesis proceeds to apply this theory to three extended studies of reception, which respectively focus on the 'affair' of *The Satanic Verses* (2006 [1988]) reception, the reading and reception of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008 [2007]), and the reading and reception of *Harare North* (2010 [2009]).¹ It tests my theory of reading through empirical study. Principally, the thesis develops an understanding of reading as hybrid, diverse, and as a form of non-understanding. In so doing, it is able to nuance conceptions of the relationship between reading and identity, and to contest denigrations of non-professional readers as threats to the postcolonial. This short introduction now clarifies the empirical component of this research and its literary corpus, before offering a breakdown of chapters.

This thesis engages with almost one thousand responses to the three texts here considered. I derive actual reception data from world media and critical studies, personal blogs, and social media platforms Amazon UK and Goodreads. In recognition of the threats posed to readers of *The Satanic Verses*, my study of the reception of the novel is confined to world media and critical studies – to those who opt to go on record as

¹ Subsequent references to each of the primary texts throughout this thesis will feature only page numbers.

respondents. My studies of the reception of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* and *Harare North* pay attention to readings documented on personal blogs, Amazon UK and Goodreads, as well as world media and critical sources. Personal blogs, Amazon UK and Goodreads reviews are characterised as ‘public’.² I therefore engage with these responses covertly. In an effort to preserve the integrity of these online readers and their readings, and after having carried out an extensive ethical review, I elect to pseudonymise these ‘participants’ and to remove direct identifiers wherever possible in a data set I have created based on their online activity.³ Participants are given an alphanumeric code. ‘G’ denotes Goodreads reviews; ‘A’ denotes Amazon UK reviews. The number refers to each reading’s position in my data sets.

My collection and analysis of this reception data is not interested in exploring the relationship between reading and digital cultures.⁴ Instead, I seek to pay attention to “common reader[s] [...who are] never in ‘the [institutional] archive,’ [...and who are] defined largely by [their] undisciplined and undisciplined reading practices” (Buurma and Heffernan, 2012, p.113). That is to say, personal blogs, Amazon UK and Goodreads provide access to *non-professional readers*. Such platforms “rende[r] reviewing more democratically accessible and interactive” (Murray, 2018, p.113). Notwithstanding, I should emphasise that non-professional is not the same as working-class. Non-professionals do not occupy any stable or coherent class position. Their participation in

² Eysenbach and Till characterise ‘public’ data as that which does not require registration to access, that which has a high number of members or viewers, and that which makes clear to viewers in terms and FAQs that the audience is large (see 2001, p.1104).

³ This approach corresponds with that of Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo (2018).

⁴ Scholars in the digital humanities continue to carry out varied research relating to reading and digital cultures. Littau (2019) has discussed the transformation of practices and perceptions of reading through the development of literary and other media technologies. On the haptics of the digital screen, compared to physical pages, see Pullinger (2008) and Hayler (2016) as well as research.ambientlit.com. Rehberg Sedo (2003) has explored the differences between physical reading groups and virtual reading communities. There is also research about the distinct characteristics of digital site use as well as its effects on not just users, but authors and the commercial book industry (see Fuller, Rehberg Sedo, and Squires, 2011; Rehberg Sedo, 2011; Driscoll 2016; Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo, 2018; and Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2019).

online reviewing culture may in fact generally mark their middle-class associations (see the final section of Chapter 4 on the material conditions of non-professional reading). I define non-professional readers here as those who tend to be denied access to literary culture's value regimes. These are readers who generally have limited authority and influence in the reception of literatures, by contrast with professional readers who often possess the expertise and authority to intervene in the valuation of particular authors, texts and readings.

As this thesis progresses, it will become clear that, like Procter and Benwell (2014, p.9), I invoke this binary understanding of reading communities in order to exploit its discontinuities, and even undo it. Indeed, given that “nonprofessional readers [...] constitute a nonruling group with limited access to having a voice on mainstream media, and low visibility and authority within the formal institutions of literary culture” (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo, 2018, p.249), I work hard to lend all professional readings considered the authority of self-representation enjoyed by professional readers. This thesis is not interested in berating non-professionals by any professional logic. In the service of equity and identifying continuities between professional and non-professional reading, this thesis seeks to “tak[e] seriously the agency and critical capacities of [non-professional] reviewers” (Driscoll and Rehberg Sedo, 2018, p.249). This thesis' theoretical democratisation of reading is therefore met by an empirical democratisation of reading. As I respond to non-professional readings, I am cautious to treat them generously. Inspired by Procter and Benwell (2014), I also take care to analyse professional and non-professional readings side-by-side. This approach suspends assumptions about the fundamental differences between these reading communities – especially assumptions of professional readings' superior ability to realise postcolonial literatures. It operates as a corrective to existing studies of the reception of postcolonial literatures, such as those by

Attridge (2012) and Srivastava (2012), which treat non-professional readings separately from those of critics, and who, in varying degrees, tend to misread non-academic responses or to recast them as insufficiently (self-)critical. My co-analysis of professional and non-professional readings allows for a registration of the mutual processes underpinning professional and non-professional reading, and for a re-evaluation of the efficacy of non-professional readings.

My reception data, comprising world media contributions, critical studies, personal blogs, and Amazon UK and Goodreads reviews, provides insight into the ways that reading takes place around the world and in different social settings. However, I recognise that it is limited in its ability to convey the diverse practices of professional and non-professional readers. First, intended for consumption (albeit by smaller and larger audiences), world media, critical studies and online book reviews are curated and may reveal less about how people read than how they want to be seen to read. During the Rushdie Affair, for example, readings confer and make visible cultural, political and religious affiliations (see Chapter 2). But, likewise, Goodreads' main purpose as a social network is also "to provide users with familiar tools that encourage them to perform their identities as readers in a public and networked forum" (Nakamura, 2013, p.240). The sources of reception data here considered therefore risk foregrounding limited conceptions of identity as key determining factors of reading. Second, especially in the case of online book reviews, data may serve an informative rather than descriptive purpose insofar as "[Amazon] reviews are used as 'guides' for future readers, or for potential readers debating whether to buy the book" (Srivastava, 2012, p.179). Furthermore, online readers with greater cultural capital and authority are more likely to function as guides than others. Such prestigious non-professionals influence others' reviews (if not their readings) (Rehberg Sedo, 2011, pp.108-110). This means that

Amazon UK and Goodreads reviews might not reliably reflect readers' own thoughts and feelings about particular texts. Third, (self-)curated and published after the fact, the data also represents individuals' retrospective accounts of reading. This data may reveal how people narrate to themselves and others the peculiarities of their and others' readings. But it might not represent the ways that people actually carry out the act of reading itself. This is especially the case with *The Satanic Verses* because my main source of reception data, *The Rushdie File* (1989), re-curates others' readings (themselves highly curated by dint of their first appearance in letters, newspapers and other media), organising them into chapters that frame and encourage particular perceptions of the responses recorded therein (by nation, for example). Finally, because of my limited proficiency in languages other than English, all reception data analysed is originally written in English. This is partly consistent with my focus on English-language novels. But it also introduces issues of partiality. This study cannot explore in any detail what readers in India, China, or Zimbabwe make of *The Satanic Verses*, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* or *Harare North* unless they read and write in English. Like *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*, this thesis admittedly "privileges readers and reading in the Anglophone world"; I join Benwell, Procter and Robinson in calling for "a more comprehensive study of postcolonial reception that "uncover[s] the multifaceted and multilingual character of these audiences, including spectators, viewers and listeners (2012b, p.2).

For each of these reasons, this thesis' empirical reception data cannot definitively account for the ways we read contemporary postcolonial literatures. The empirical component of this study is a necessarily limited corrective to postcolonial studies' lack of engagement with actual reading (see Chapter 1). It pays attention to the ways in which some readers discursively perform reading in specific social settings. Yet reading is itself

performative and social. The representation of reading is not the same as reading (even if they are imaginatively related). But the performative and motivated aspects of the reception data gathered here are not necessarily specific to representations of reading, but are endemic to practices of actual reading. Professional and non-professional readings alike “are essentially performances (a staging of reading, not pure response) and performative (a repetition of the rules of language, conversation and discourse)” (Procter, 2008, p.186). Moreover, “interpretation [or reading] is primarily a performative act rather than an explanatory one, although more often than not performance is mistaken for explanation” (Iser, 2000, p.7). Chapter 1’s elaboration of the reader as constituted by a reading self and a self-in-the-world testifies to the performative aspects of actual reading. It highlights the extent to which the reading self stages one’s self as other, while the self-in-the-world performs existing material, cultural and epistemic positions. My collection and analysis of this reception data therefore complements existing ethnographic studies of how reading groups respond to postcolonial texts (such as Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012a; and Procter and Benwell, 2014).

Having clarified the empirical component of my methodology, I now justify my literary corpus. Readers of this thesis will encounter readings of Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, Xiaolu Guo’s *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, and Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North*. The reasons for this corpus are several. First, these three texts are united in theme by migration to London: Salahuddin Chamchawala and Gibreel Farishta hurtle toward (Proper) London from the sky at the beginning of *The Satanic Verses*; Zhuang ‘Z’ Xiao Qiao arrives in London to study English at the beginning of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*; and the unnamed narrator of *Harare North* claims asylum in Britain, and subsequently resides in Brixton, London. The treatment of migration in these texts manifests most clearly the textual and material

activities of the reading self and the self-in-the-world insofar as it stages dialectical encounters between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Indeed, considering that “[t]he globalization of publishing [...] generates immigrating books” (Walkowitz, 2006, p.533), these texts’ dramatisations of migration evoke their own migrations as books into the hands of readers and their immanent hybridity as texts.

Second, my focus on just three texts by three different authors provides the space to perform detailed explorations of the readings generated by each text. In addition, by contrast with much literary criticism which collates texts for analysis – effectively *pre-reading* them – by theme, location (of production or thematic address), motifs or theoretical enquiry, I address each text in turn in order to mimic as far as possible acts of reading, which see readers singularly engage with one text at any given time. I perform a reading of my own practices of reading, set against the reading practices of others as documented in world media, scholarship, and online archives. At times, this kind of forensic textual analysis is painstakingly slow. But the advantage of reading – and writing – in this way is that we gain the opportunity to retrospectively and actively register the interpretive and affective mechanics of reading literatures called postcolonial. In so doing, we also refrain from making assumptions (often weighted in favour of professional literary critique) about what texts mean, how they mean, and to whom. This patient reading and analysis of readings also seeks to reproduce the affects of reading. Reading this thesis is intended to elicit some of the qualities of reading my corpus in the present, partly as an antidote to “[t]he belatedness of critique” (Felski, 2015, p.123). I anticipate that such a mode of investigation may at times prompt feelings of disorientation. On this, I beg readers’ indulgence, and recite John McLeod’s insight that “disorientation is [...] very much a productive and valuable sensation”, and that, given its partial responsibility for the efficacy of the postcolonial, it is worth keeping intact (McLeod, 2010, p.14).

Third, this thesis is confined to a study of the reading and reception of novels for the sake of time, scope and ease. Reception data online is largely concentrated to novels. In addition, on websites with book review facilities, it is not possible to disaggregate poems from poetry collections, nor to access the reception of plays beyond their reception in print form. Despite my focus on novels, I recognise that genre is a construct that depends on affirmative reading practices.⁵ I also acknowledge that some of this project's conclusions may resonate with experiences of art forms more broadly. My detailed account of reading three novels nonetheless provides the foundations for further research into the reading and reception of different art forms, especially the extent to which aesthetic response is organised by a hybridised, material and textual engagement with isolated texts.

This introduction now concludes with a brief outline of each chapter. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the ways in which postcolonial scholars have thought about reading. It identifies a key division in the field. Textualist approaches tend to optimistically celebrate the possibilities of highly professionalised readings. Materialist approaches tend to pessimistically devalue reading in light of the material and cultural conditions of production and consumption. Drawing on Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory (1978; 1993; 2000), especially its implicit understanding of reading as affective, hybrid, and organised by the dialectical ethics and politics of reading, I proceed to articulate my innovative theory of reading. This theory of reading makes four key claims. First, reading is intrinsically textual and material. In order to conceptualise reading as hybrid, I conceptualise readers as made up of a reading self and a self-in-the-world. Second, the textual activities of the reading self and the material activities of the self-in-

⁵ As I have argued elsewhere, oral literary cultures and e-publishing and online reading platforms contest notions of genre, which originate with print culture (see Toth and Nicholls, 2019, pp.33-34).

the-world intersect because they are directed by individual readers. Third, reading is affective. The text affects the reading self. The reading self affects the self-in-the-world. The self-in-the-world affects the reading self. The reading self affects the text. This happens again and again over the course of reading. Fourth, the affects of reading generate ethical and political interfaces. The ethics of reading allows readers to reconstitute themselves and their horizons through the horizon of the text. The politics of reading allows readers to recognise and situate themselves in the world. Importantly, the ethics and politics of reading are inseparable because they are undertaken by the reading self and the self-in-the-world, who make up a single reader. This means that politics proceeds by ethics, and ethics by politics. This theory of reading democratises the act of reading postcolonial literatures.

Chapter 2, 'Reading Responses to *The Satanic Verses* (1988)', applies my theory of reading in order to account for the divisive public reception of the text. Against readings of the 'affair' as polarised by readers' differing cultural and religious affiliations, I argue that *The Satanic Verses*' reception is organised by an opposition between those who primarily adopt a materialist reading strategy, and those who primarily opt for a textualist approach. These *orthodoxies of reading* depend on rationalising the text's diverse themes and modes of address as well as the meta-representational strategies in which themes and modes of address are housed. But, crucially, they are immanently unstable. Respondents are implicitly and explicitly unable to maintain their critical orthodoxies. I proceed to deploy my model of reading in order to reintroduce diversity in reading. I perform a patient literary analysis of *The Satanic Verses*' representation of Proper London in order to excavate the multiple ways in which readers may hybridly engage with Proper London.

Chapter 3, ‘Translating the Production of Space in Xiaolu Guo’s *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2007)’, applies the concept metaphor of translation to think through the processes of reading the novel’s production of space. It uses the dominant paradigms of translation, foreignisation and domestication, to elaborate the spatial and epistemic activities of the reading self and the self-in-the-world. My sustained analysis henceforth traces the ways in which reading both “send[s] the reader abroad” and “bring[s] the author [and text] back home” (Venuti, 2004, p.20), where travelling “abroad” involves ethical attunement with an alternative, non-standard production of space, and where bringing the text “home” entails assimilating the text’s production of space into readers’ existing (and inherently political), standardised production of space. With reference to reception data derived from world media, critical studies, and online book review platforms, I emphasise the ways in which *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* generates hybridised readings that variously invoke and estrange what I term the spatial ‘standard’, coined after a coordination of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of spatial production and Tony Crowley’s characterisation of the language ‘standard’. I focus especially on the affects associated with first-person narrator’s eclectic production of space and the ways in which the first- and second-person narrative points of view may alter our sense of where the spatial-epistemic categories of “home” and “abroad” are located.

Chapter 4, ‘Non-Understanding in the Reception of Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* (2009)’, starts by registering the narrative voice’s difficulty among professional and non-professional readers alike. The chapter proceeds to place professional and non-professional respondents’ understandings of the narrative plot in conversation in order to highlight their mutual difficulty in comprehending the narrative plot. By describing the ethical and political efficacy of a range of realist, diagnostic, and revelatory readings in

turn, and notwithstanding their limited readings of *Harare North*, the chapter principally advances that reading is a form of non-understanding. Taking its lead from one non-professional respondent's explicit admission of non-understanding, the chapter finally thinks about the distinct advantages of self-acknowledged non-understanding where the reading of postcolonial literatures is concerned.

Each of these studies refines the notion of reading as dialectically material and textual, as affective, and as ethical and political. In turn, they articulate reading as hybrid, diverse, and characterised productively by non-understanding. They are also cumulative, and intended to actively and retrospectively inform one another: hence, Chapters 2 and 3 take forward Chapter 1's notion of reading's essential hybridity; and hence the final chapter's conception of reading as non-understanding becomes a lens through which to understand both the hybrid reception of *The Satanic Verses* and the diversity of postcolonial responses to *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. This thesis therefore challenges both abiding critical assumptions about the relationship between reading and identity, about 'Western' and non-professional readers' inelegant and even neocolonial practices. It also disputes the idealisation of a small range of hyperprofessionalised reading strategies as uniquely capable of realising the potential of postcolonial literatures. Throughout, it identifies the sophisticated processes of self-recognition and self-reconstitution undertaken by non-professional readers in spite of the limitations of the book review genre. On this basis, the conclusion to this thesis asks for a more sustained empirical engagement with reading in postcolonial studies. It identifies new avenues of enquiry in this arena.

1. A Theory of Reading Postcolonial Literatures

This chapter features two extended sections. Section One reviews postcolonial scholars' existing understandings of reading. It highlights two traditions of thought. Textualist scholars tend to celebrate the possibilities of distinctly professionalised practices of reading, while implicitly or explicitly denigrating non-professional practices of reading. Materialist scholars and book historians tend to emphasise the limits of reading where the contestation of empire's material and epistemic legacies are concerned. The inequities of the global literary marketplace are seen to foreclose the possibilities of both postcolonial texts and postcolonial readings. Notwithstanding, I show that materialist scholars' interest in the material conditions that inhibit the postcolonial is ultimately manifest in precisely the same desire to develop and inhabit more ethical reading-positions. Thus, both textualist and materialist critics tend to concern themselves with ideal reading over actual reading, with prescribing, rather than describing reading. Both textualist and materialist approaches are consequently limited in their ability to account for the intrinsic hybridity of actual reading as a material and a textual activity. Section Two draws out reader-response theory's key ideas about reading by placing Iser's work in conversation with affect theory and conceptions of the ethics and politics of reading. It proceeds to develop reader-response theory in order to articulate an innovative theory of reading postcolonial literatures. Reading, I argue, is an affective activity that 'moves' us elsewhere. This is because reading splits the subject, manifesting a textually-oriented reading self and a materially-oriented self-in-the-world, and because the reading self and the self-in-the-world exist in mutually-transformative dialectical tension, thus textualising the material and materialising the textual. Reading is thus defined by subtle and acute processes of (self-)recognition and (self-)transformation. I proceed to show that reading's intrinsic

hybridity moves readers toward political and ethical positions that may or may not complement the project of postcolonialism.

1.1. Reading and Reception in Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial scholars have devised a range of different reading approaches, including: ‘contrapuntal reading’ (Said, 2003), ‘responsible reading’ (Attridge, 2004; 2012), ‘reading for resistance’ (Boehmer, 2018), ‘reading against the grain’ (Spivak, 1987; Nicholls, 2010), ‘close reading’ (Spivak, 2006), ‘symptomatic reading’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002), ‘reading the referent’ (Gikandi, 2000), and even ‘postcolonial (as) reading’ (McLeod, 2010). These interpretive strategies are invariably valorised either as more penetrating (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin; Gikandi; Said), more ethical (Attridge), or more politically enabling or transformative (Spivak; Nicholls; Boehmer; McLeod). Optimism about postcolonial texts and postcolonial readings abounds. Yet, the discipline scarcely engages with actual reading, especially as practiced by readers beyond the academy. As a corollary, these postcolonial reading strategies present as superior to typically undeveloped notions of, for example, “*conventional* modes of reading and thinking” (McLeod, 2010, p.34; emphasis added). As Sarah Brouillette observes, “more elite readers often seem to believe that there is a general public engaged in a similar activity (reading), but who practise it *badly*” (2007, p.25; original emphasis). Thus, Attridge develops ‘responsible reading’ in contradistinction to what he projects as the tendency to irresponsibly “reduc[e] the work to an example of pleasurable exoticism” (Attridge, 2012, p.235). With these reading strategies, scholars limit the affects of reading. Rita Felski has questioned this tendency, asking: “Why – even as we extol multiplicity, difference, hybridity – is the affective range of criticism so limited?” (Felski,

2015, p.13).⁶ Why indeed, given that literary training and scholars' performance of institutionally-recognised brands of critique does not eliminate the diversity and ambivalence of their actual interpretive and affective engagements, but merely reduces their priority?⁷

Delegitimisations of non-academic readings (and a distrust of their affects) tend to be premised on a lack of rigorous engagement with reading and reception, and on inhospitable analyses of non-professional readings. For example, Attridge's assumption that non-professional readers are exoticists is based on his reading of four book reviews hosted on Amazon UK and two on Amazon US. Though certainly some contributions in this highly selective sample "reflect a preoccupation with cultural difference", as Attridge suggests (2012, p.243), his interpretation of the reviews is slightly unforgiving. On another reading, several of the reviews reproduced appear interested in precisely the kind of 'responsible reading' Attridge describes, chiefly in "increasing one's knowledge about the cultural context of the work and at the same time scrutinising one's own assumptions for cultural biases" (2012, p.238). Critical reading strategies therefore risk implying exaggeratedly uneducated, conservative and careless non-professional/metropolitan readerships in place of actual readerships outside the academy. Insofar as they are motivated by a "suspicion of the commonplace and the everyday", critical reading strategies "ris[k] entrenching the notion that critical thinking is the unique provenance of intellectuals – enclosing it within the rarefied space of the academy" (Anker and Felski, 2017, p.14). This demonisation of non-academic readers recurs even though "few researchers have performed the detailed analyses of reading practices that might justify the identification of a characteristic mode of cosmopolitan consumption that is

⁶ See also Armstrong (1990) on the "limited pluralism" of literary criticism (1990, p.2).

⁷ Peter McDonald similarly suggests that "the vulnerable 'ordinary' reader [...] lives on secretly in the heart of every tried and tested critic" (2010, p.483).

dehistoricizing and depoliticizing” (Brouillette, 2007, p.24). We do not possess sufficient data to generalise about non-professionals readers of postcolonial literature as cosmopolitan, let alone exoticist.

Not just at times elitist, generalisations about non-professional readerships – as cosmopolitan, metropolitan, or (neo)colonial agents – also “devalue the agency, both individual and collective, of [postcolonial literature’s] *readers*, who by no means form a homogeneous or readily identifiable consumer group” (Huggan, 2001, p.30). Contemporary suspicions about the category of the individual (see Davies, 1997, xiv; Armstrong, 2011) and materialist registrations of our communal embeddedness within larger systems such as capitalism (see Brouillette, 2007) have made us distrustful of the singularity of readers and their readings. But, as Graham Huggan tells us,

Postcolonial literatures in English – to make an obvious point – are read by many different people in many different places; it would be misleading, not to mention arrogant, to gauge their value only to Western metropolitan response. And it would be as difficult to distinguish a single reading public as to identify its location, in part because readers of postcolonial works are part of an increasingly diasporised, transnational English-speaking culture, but most of all because literary/cultural audiences all over the world are by their very nature plural and heterogeneous. (Huggan, 2001, p.30)

Just as critical readings are multiple, so too are non-academic readings: they can variously confirm and contest the value-regimes that underpin global commodity culture of which postcolonial literature is part. Likewise, readerships are not monolithic. Simply because one can identify the location of reading (i.e. the ‘West’) does not entail that reading is determined by location.

We can identify several reasons why postcolonial literary studies is fertile ground for critical reading strategies, but not for in-depth studies of reading and reception. First, to paraphrase Paul B. Armstrong, our ability to read well, however so defined, is a source of disciplinary authority (2011, p.107). This is especially the case in postcolonial studies

where, as Felski notices, “the devastating change of ‘being insufficiently critical’ can lead to a sense of being excommunicated from the field” (2015, p.124). Recognising the integrity of non-professional readings can mean surrendering expertise, or even becoming the non-professional (characterised as non-critical) other. Second, “foregrounding readers, viewers and listeners (ideal or actual) risks compromising some of the more general claims that have been made in the field around the transformative, resistant or subversive capacities of isolated postcolonial texts” – and, we may add, pursuant ‘postcolonial’ readings (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012b, p.8). The historic lack of rigorous engagement with reading, then, bespeaks disciplinary anxieties around registering and empowering postcolonial agencies. To invoke landmark definitions of postcolonial literature, an engagement with reading may mean tempering – or rendering optimistic – claims about postcolonial literature’s ability to give voice to the marginalised and formerly colonised (Innes, 2007, p.4) and to “undercut thematically and formally the discourse which supported colonization – the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination” (Boehmer, 2005, p.14). Reading introduces ambivalence to the enunciative act performed by texts. An engagement with readers – their role in ‘listening’ to the voices of the marginalised, and in transmitting postcolonial discourses – frustrates attempts to characterise texts as transformative, resistant, subversive and even postcolonial precisely because such characteristics are an effect of reading (or not).

The empire only “writes back” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002) insofar as readers recognise it doing so in the moment of reading. As my analyses in subsequent chapters will demonstrate, among other things, many readers implicitly question the extent to which postcolonial texts ‘write back’. To select but a few examples, readers variously register *The Satanic Verses*’ perpetuation of Christian-derived prejudices about Islam, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*’ refusal to liberate its Chinese

protagonist, *Harare North*'s demonisation of post-independence Zimbabwe, and the problematically-poised linguistic non-fluency of these latter two novels. Moreover, if we are to believe Gikandi (2000), postcolonial reading experiences depend on readers' registration of intertextual references,⁸ and their accurate identification of such intertexts as historical intertextual references to real events or as figural intertextual references to events in the text world.⁹ My analysis of actual responses to postcolonial texts shows that responses to intertexts have the potential to be diverse. Readers may project different historical referents for Babylon in *The Satanic Verses*. Readers of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* may or may not read 're-education' as a historical intertext of People's Republic of China's 1960s 'Up to the mountains and down to the countryside' policy (上山下乡) through which millions of urban youth were displaced to mountainous and pastoral regions. Readers of *Harare North* sometimes read Shingi and the Brixton squat as mutual figural intertexts.

If Homi Bhabha's discussion of the intrinsic hybridity of the colonial text in 'Signs Taken for Wonders' can be extended to account for texts more broadly, postcolonial discourse is hybridised in encounters with actual readers because, during reading, "it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced" (Bhabha, 1985, p.144). Celebrations of the postcolonial affects of texts can be upheld only when the *modus operandi* (professional reading) is conflated with the *opus* (literary work), or, put another way, "only when texts are removed from the contingent relations they share with different reading publics, at different historical moments" (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012b, p.8). Let us here differentiate between the literary *work* (a manuscript, written but unread), and the literary

⁸ Mason (2019) finds that readers may also choose not to identify intertextual references as an act of identity construction.

⁹ The distinction between figural and historical intertextual references is an effect of reading. Readers' knowledges and in-the-world experiences affect their ability to identify references as real or imagined.

text (written and read). Our interest is in the literary text: I work on the presumption that “[t]he process of writing [...] includes as a dialectic correlative the process of reading, and these two interdependent acts require two differently active people” (Iser, 1978, p.108). Texts are co-produced by readers and literary works. This means that a given work may be colonial at the point of production, but become postcolonial when its popular or critical reception transforms it into a text. As Robert Fraser has argued, “a fondness for authors such as [H. Rider] Haggard” is not straightforwardly “a symptom of intellectual and political backwardness” insofar as “common readers [...] disassemble such texts and reassemble them according to a logic – often a political logic – of their own making” (2008, p.175).¹⁰ Conversely, it means that works can be postcolonial at the site of production, but more politically ambivalent as texts. For example, in her ethnographic study of customers of ‘Planet Books’ bookshop in Lusaka, Zambia, Ranka Primorac has found that Zambians sometimes read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* for knowledge (Primorac, 2012, p.507). Texts are almost infinitely iterable: any given literary critic’s perception of any given text “is, after all, nothing more than the experience of a cultured reader – in other words, it is only one of the possible realizations of a text” (Iser, 1993, p.4). Reading postcolonial texts is especially contingent and diverse given that postcolonial literature is “a literary field that is probably not even recognised as postcolonial by many of its [non-professional] readers” (Huggan, 2012, xiv).¹¹

In summary, the architects of critical reading approaches typically manage to remain optimistic about the possibilities of postcolonial literatures and postcolonial

¹⁰ For an example of such dissensus between production and reception, see Freud’s dream-reading of H. Rider Haggard’s *She* and *Heart of the World* in which he seems to negotiate his Jewishness (1997, pp.305-306). Thanks to Brendon Nicholls for drawing my attention to this. Consider also Steve Biko’s decolonial appropriation of G. W. F. Hegel in the development of the Black Consciousness Movement (see Toth and Nicholls, 2019).

¹¹ Even those who recognise their field as postcolonial have differing and incompatible conceptions of the postcolonial. On the field’s internal inconsistencies and conflicts, see Parry (2004) and McLeod (2017).

readings either because they believe that they are removing texts from harm's way (the inelegant interpretive practices of readers variously defined as lay, metropolitan, cosmopolitan, and neocolonial), or because they obscure the differences between the literary work and its reception. To illustrate the former position, Derek Attridge is commendably interested in preserving the integrity of multiple readings and in contesting the position that "responsible reading hinge[s] on the time and money one has available to carry out the research needed to establish that context", an argument that "would discredit most of the actual reading that takes place" (2012, p.238). Yet on the same page, he postulates that "[o]ne's readings are, surely, usually improved by increasing one's knowledge about the cultural context of the work and at the same time scrutinising one's own assumptions for cultural biases" (2012, p.238). As his argument proceeds, it is clear he believes that such an "improvement" requires time and money, not to mention a brand of self-reflexivity typical among English Literature graduates. To exemplify the latter, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin regularly imply that texts – not interpretations – are vessels for meaning (see especially their analysis of language and metonymy in K. S. Maniam's *The Cord*, 2002, pp.52-53). In some cases, critics hold both positions at once. Elleke Boehmer celebrates "a *postcolonial* reading attentive to such figures [and structures in the text]" as capable of "bringing [its] [political] vision and [...cultural] values to light" (Boehmer, 2018, p.4; emphasis added). In so doing, she valorises professional readings as responsible for the effect of the postcolonial, or for excavating a 'political unconscious', to evoke the title of Fredric Jameson's (1981) foundational text from which Boehmer seems to inherit the idea that texts possess political visions that are realisable by (critical) reading. Yet she later describes the postcolonial text "as a score for reading", and even insists that "literary structures [...] are our thought" (Boehmer, 2018, p.7; p.2); in so doing, she simultaneously collapses the difference between literary works and

literary interpretations. Boehmer's endorsement of a particular form of professional critique attests to the contingencies of reading. Yet, by equating this reading with the text, she seeks to conceal the partiality of her own brand of reading which, to deploy Procter's critique of professional reading, operates within a formalist tradition of "specialist postcolonial reading, whereby politics are 'read off' at the level of the aesthetic" (Procter, 2009, p.182).

Boehmer is by no means unique. Many postcolonial scholars utilise a diagnostic form of critique (broadly considered), behaving as "*expert[s]* [...] engaged in the *scrutiny* of an object in order to decode certain *defects* or flaws that are not readily or automatically apparent to a non-specialist perspective" (Anker and Felski, 2017, p.4; original emphasis). What we must note, however, is that "diagnosis is both a speech act and a stance or orientation" (Anker and Felski, 2017, p.4). What critics 'find' in the text as symptoms, they also create; it is not clear that all critics, let alone all readers 'find' and create precisely the same meanings during reading.

Postcolonial studies is a diverse field. As my engagement with scholars like Huggan, Brouillette, and Benwell, Procter and Robinson shows, a range of critics *have* engaged with the contingencies of the postcolonial, and *have* sought to highlight the ambivalences of the production, circulation and reception of postcolonial literatures. For the purposes of managing the diversity of postcolonial scholarship, allow me to describe the architects of critical reading approaches as belonging to a *textualist* tradition of postcolonial studies, by contrast with postcolonial critics and book historians like Huggan and Brouillette, here described as working in a *materialist* tradition. These terms necessarily oversimplify the breadth of postcolonial scholarship undertaken over the last five or so decades. The term 'textualist' may do a disservice to some scholars responsible for critical reading strategies, particularly symptomatic readers who avow Marx,

Althusser and/or Jameson as influences. In characterising such scholars as textualists, I mean to register the way in which they appropriate Marxism as an aesthetic – a way of reading – and neglect Marxist principles of institutional critique.¹² This opposition between textualism and materialism more broadly may be willfully inadequate; it struggles to account for postcolonialists such as Spivak for example, who attempts to straddle both traditions.¹³ Notwithstanding the problems with categorising postcolonial critics as materialist or textualist, these terms do help to capture the two dominant critical moods about reading specifically. This distinction therefore allows us to problematise both approaches' leading assumptions about how reading takes place. Indeed, ultimately, I contest this false critical dichotomy around reading in postcolonial studies, and seek to show that reading is always intrinsically material and textual. Now moving to consider the claims of materialist postcolonial scholars, then, I highlight that, compared with textualist critics, they are far less optimistic about the postcolonial agencies of authors, texts, and readers.¹⁴ In what follows, I review materialists' principle arguments, and proceed to draw out their implications for thinking about reading and its postcolonial potential.

First, the locations of global publishing complicate the ability of isolated texts and readings to transform, subvert or resist colonial formations of space, economics, and literary culture. The world's largest publishing houses are predominantly located in major metropolitan cities in the Global North (Huggan, 2001, p.4; Brouillette, 2007, p.10).

¹² Ahmad offers the best account of postcolonialists' adoption of Marxism for bourgeois critical reading projects (see 1992, pp.5-6). Parry makes a similar argument in 'The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies' (see 2004, p.75).

¹³ The jury is out as to whether Spivak is successful in allying robust Marxist critique with Derridean poststructuralism. For one critique of her attempts, see Toth (2019).

¹⁴ Felski has argued that 'critique' at large is pessimistic (2015, pp.127-134). I depart from this view here in acknowledgement that, while textualist scholars are pessimistic about others' critical and postcolonial potential, they are often optimistic about their own abilities to unlock or empower postcolonial potential, as we have seen in their advocacy of critical reading strategies.

Historically, this spatial skew has seen publishers in the Global North champion and canonise Global Southern writers even as those same publishers sustain the political marginalisation of peoples and regions in the Global South (for example, see Davis, 2013, p.5 on Oxford University Press' Three Crown Series and apartheid). Today, the predominance of metropolitan Global North publishers means that writers from elsewhere are at the mercy of cultural milieus and literary tastes from without (see Nwaubani, 2014). Apart from commercial publishing, we could also register the unidirectionality and ensuing charges of Anglo- and Eurocentrism in respect of book aid programs around the world. Through what Summer Edward calls 'donation dumping' in the wake of environmental disasters (themselves caused and distributed by wealthy, fossil fuel-burning regions like the US, Europe, and China), publishers and booksellers secure tax breaks while their 'beneficiaries' gain books that are neither culturally appropriate nor, at times, written in the first language of the nation (2018, np).¹⁵

Global commodity culture is not straightforwardly "neocolonial", however (Huggan, 2001, p.7). Spatial discontinuities between writers and publishers can alter and inhibit the production, circulation and reception of postcolonial literatures, especially because space is politically interested (see Chapter 3). But it is worth nuancing our understanding of the marketplace's spatial asymmetries. Metropolitan publishers in the Global North can also secure readerships for minority traditions, and enable the transmission of postcolonial discourses. Leeds-based, independent publisher Peepal Tree Press is exemplary in this regard having published over three hundred titles by Caribbean

¹⁵ Though our primary concern is with English-language literatures and the literary marketplace, it is also worth highlighting that the literary translation industry is similarly asymmetrical. More English-language novels are translated and disseminated around the world than non-English-language books are diffused in Anglophone contexts (Venuti, 2004, p.15). Moreover, Esther Allen finds that between 2000 and 2006, when non-English-language books *were* translated into English in the US, they tended to be originally written in European languages – in descending order: French, Spanish, Italian and German – rather than languages with less linguistic, economic and social currency (2007, p.26). For a way of thinking about the unequal currency of the languages of literatures, see Casanova (2004).

and Black British writers since its inception in 1985; independent presses in New York and California have a history of supporting African writing (Jackson, 2017, np). Following Ruth Bush and Madhu Krishnan, we could also highlight the achievements of London-based New Beacon Books and Bogle L'Ouverture, Paris-based *Présence Africaine* or Chicago-based Third World Press in bringing to global attention literatures of Africa and its diasporas (2016, p.1). Likewise, when the location of writing and publishing coincide (in the Global South, for example), it does not guarantee the creation and dissemination of the 'postcolonial'. As Elizabeth le Roux points out, it is difficult in practice to define a 'local' publisher given the preeminence of local subsidiaries of major multinational corporations (2012, p.75). The operations of multinational corporations in the Global South remain crucial to the accessibility of books both locally and internationally (see Fraser, 2008, p.187 on Penguin India), though their global dominance can see the prioritisation of English-language literatures (Brouillette, 2007, p.59). Questions arise, too, about the relationship between independent local publishers and the 'postcolonial'. Sarah Brouillette's recent critique of Nairobi-based literary hub Kwani Trust as "Western-facing" and funded by private foreign donors raises issues about local independent presses' ability to facilitate the production and consumption of postcolonial discourses (2017, np).¹⁶ Kwani Trust's financial structure is not uncommon; in her article on the reception of African scholarly texts, Elizabeth le Roux worries that "the global publishing industry is so skewed in favour of the North that African publishers can, potentially, be assisted only through the intervention of donors" (2012, p.77).¹⁷

¹⁶ For a more positive appraisal of Kwani Trust, see Kate Wallis (2016, pp.41-42).

¹⁷ Brouillette and le Roux are writing from different vantage points here: le Roux advocates South-North flows, while Brouillette is suspicious of the motivations behind marketing African texts globally. She reports that the outward-looking business model of Kwani Trust is partly attributable to the perception that there are no African readers of English-language literature, and that "developing local markets [in Africa]" is "a lost cause given the population's overall levels of wealth, English-language literacy, and interest in literature" (Brouillette, 2007, np).

It is not just the locations of literary production and consumption that complicate (textualist) celebrations of postcolonial literatures and pursuant readings. In recent times, scholars have drawn attention to the limited number and variety of texts that are actually published owing to the globalisation of print cultures.¹⁸ The influence of major publishing houses on pre-publication manuscripts further disputes the characterisation of published literatures as ‘postcolonial’, in the sense of a range of dispositions and strategies broadly concerned with contesting the material and epistemic legacies of empire. Publishers opt for works according to not just socio-historically produced literary tastes, but also the particularities of their spatial, cultural, economic and political locations as well as writers’ perceived associations with particular spatial, cultural, economic and political locations (see Brouillette, 2007, pp.59-61). Publishers also co-opt such works by way of their locations: they have a hand in fashioning authors’ narratives to cater to the perceived preferences of foreign audiences. In her discussion of South East Asian writers, Ruvani Ranasinha finds that Anglo-American “publishers and reviewers [act] as socio-historical filters through which culture is transmitted” (2007a, p.15). John K. Young’s *Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth-Century African American Literature* identifies alarming instances in which “the predominantly white publishing industry” sanitised, depoliticised and mythologised black authors’ representations through editorial work in an attempt to make texts more palatable and more saleable (Young, 2006, pp.3-4).¹⁹ Tom Sperlinger (2015) reports that American publisher Alfred Knopf asked Doris Lessing to change the ending of *The Grass is Singing* (1950) to include a rape scene between white Rhodesian Mary Turner and her black servant, Moses.

¹⁸ For an insight in the ways that globalisation has impacted literary production and reception, see André Shiffirin (1999).

¹⁹ In an incisive discussion of South African writer Miriam Tlali’s experience of publishing with Ravan Press, Elizabeth le Roux (2018) warns against the uncritical denunciation of white editors and white-run presses as neoliberal capitalist and colonial agents. She reminds us that editing can have to do with improving manuscripts, even in acutely colonial contexts like South African apartheid.

Lessing refused to change the manuscript, publishing it with Thomas Y. Crowell instead. When the novel was published in the United Kingdom (with publisher Michael Joseph in 1950), it had been banned in South Africa (as had Doris Lessing) because of the novel's allusions to an interracial affair between Mary and Moses (Fraser, 2008, p.158). This history aptly highlights the extent to which publishers censor works and governments censor texts for the perceived benefit of target audiences. Consequently, we may question whether we have ever truly had access to properly postcolonial literatures.

The digital age has generated alternatives to the global literary marketplace, providing postcolonial writers and authors of minoritised cultures, languages and literary traditions greater control over their creations, as well as offering readers greater access to and flexibility in reading (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017, Harris, 2019). The kinds of authors and texts published online, however, can sometimes mirror those selected by international publishers, i.e. middle-class authors and transcultural texts (see Adenekan and Cousins, 2014; Adenekan, 2016 on Kenyan and Nigerian writing). We may therefore intuit that writers who publish online sometimes engage in precisely the same acts of compromise as those who publish with major global publishing presses. Writers deploy narrative tropes and bodily figurations that align with historically-bound literary and cultural criteria and the perceived cultural horizons of target audiences. So acknowledged is this phenomenon that the late Binyavanga Wainaina (2005) satirised it in an essay for *Granta*, recommending that aspiring African authors homogenise, exoticise and primitivise Africa in order to secure readers abroad, whose appetites remain for an Africa that is other, albeit knowable in that otherness.²⁰ Incisive though Wainaina's critique of global readerships is, writers' appropriation of foreign values and sensibilities is marked by greater

²⁰ Brouillette has criticised Wainaina himself as a "premier cultural broke[r], facilitating other writers' access to the mechanisms of publication and promotion" (2017, np).

ambivalence than his polemic implies. Wainaina suggests that authors deny themselves voices in the process of assimilating cultural and literary prejudices from without. But it can be subversive when writers participate in assimilation and mimicry (or “staged marginality”, whereby minorities imitate a kind of self-subordination for the amusement and utility of majority groups).²¹ Nonetheless, “the practical results of this covert resistance are usually limited”: mimicry can turn into masquerade, and “merely act to reconfirm the disempowerment of ‘subordinate’ groups *vis-à-vis* the dominant culture” (Huggan, 2001, p.88). Writers may assimilate target audiences’ values in order to interrogate those prejudices; yet, in so doing, they risk inviting their works to be read as affirming European exceptionalism and superiority as well as testifying to cultural differences.

Notwithstanding the potentially conflicting aims and motivations of global, often Anglo-American publishers and their presumed readers on the one hand, and postcolonial writers on the other, then, it is important to remind ourselves that a counterinitiative comprising “the encouragement of homegrown epistemologies, the cultural-nationalist protection of resources, and local ownership of and control over the means of cultural production” would not guarantee the postcolonial production and reception of texts (Huggan, 2001, p.55). The history of colonialism, coupled with contemporary globalisation, challenges such nativist thinking (Huggan, 2001, p.55-56).²² By dint of postcolonial literatures’ complex genealogies, then, we may more usefully conceive of the text as witness to the material and epistemic processes of colonisation, decolonisation, and globalisation. Focusing especially on latter here, the text is “less an object than a

²¹ What appears as cultural assimilation may also be authentic to some writers’ hybrid cultural identities (see pgs.101-102 for a discussion of Salman Rushdie’s complex cultural affiliations).

²² For example, it is a crisis in terms to speak of native African national literature when ‘Africa’ itself is a colonial construction (see Zeleza, 2006).

palimpsest of the process of making and unmaking as writers' manuscripts are edited and packaged for publication, and then studied" (Low, 2011, pp.141-142). An understanding of postcolonial literatures as palimpsests makes clear the processes of erasure and reinscription built into their production, marketing, circulation, reception and institutionalisation. Perhaps one area in which postcolonial literatures' realities as palimpsests is most clear is in the transformation of manuscripts into marketable, distributable texts by way of paratexts "such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations" (Genette, 1997, p.1; see also Waring, 1995). Drawing on Lizarríbar's landmark historical study, Graham Huggan has highlighted the "blatantly exoticist packaging" of Heinemann African Writers Series books (Huggan, 2001, p.107).²³ John K. Young meanwhile finds that publishing and marketing houses essentialise and allegorise representations by African American authors, "mark[ing] [authors] in advertisements, prefaces and other paratextual material as black, even when their texts themselves might belie such a strict classification" (Young, 2006, p.4). Of course, though book covers and other paratextual features are aimed at influencing audience reception, readers may nonetheless refuse the interpretation offered (Squires, 2007, p.89). Young nonetheless makes an important point here: black authors are marketed, if not read, through a lens of authenticity. British South Asian authors are also pigeon-holed by publishers through lenses of race and ethnicity for the purposes of profitability (Saha, 2016). According to Ruvani Ranasinha, in the case of the reception of South East Asian authors, British readers seem to assimilate the readings enacted on texts by publishers, characterising writers as "native informant[s]" or "unreliable informant[s]" according to their perceived fidelity to a South Asia that is a priori imagined in the West (2007a, pp.21-22). The extent to which authors are perceived as racially, ethnically or culturally

²³ See Fraser (2008, pp.182-183) for a critique of Lizarríbar and Huggan's assessments of the African Writers Series.

authentic may have to do with their name printed on book covers (see Brouillette, 2007, pp.65-68; Rogers, 2015, p.87). It may also have to do with typesetting: Ranasinha recounts how Penguin italicised all non-English words in the proofs returned to Mulk Raj Anand; resultantly, the publisher subtly increased the ‘foreignness’ of both the text and India, despite the author’s efforts to normalise and humanise Indian peoples and cultures (2007a, p.32). Pre-1980s, South East Asian English-language literatures also “needed British literary figures to endorse or ‘puff’ their books [in forewords, prefaces and prize recommendations]” (Fraser, 2008, p.183); such paratexts inevitably alter, precisely as they ensure, books’ reception. In terms of paratexts, we could also consider the effects of setting texts on particular educational syllabi or including them within journals, magazines or anthologies.²⁴ To summarise, there are paratextual traditions that, even as they enable the global circulation and reception of postcolonial texts, limit the transformative or radical potential of such texts by inviting anthropological interpretive approaches or readings that variously confirm, rather than challenge, orientalist and exoticist assumptions.

The issues associated with paratexts raise questions about the classification and study of postcolonial texts, and the use of ‘postcolonial’ to designate a pursuant academic field. Might ascribing some texts as ‘postcolonial’ valorise particular interpretive approaches? To redeploy Aijaz Ahmad’s critique of Third World literature and colonial discourse analysis, might the application of ‘postcolonial’ to texts “privilege coloniality as the framing term of epochal experience” and establish “national identity [...] as the

²⁴ Rogers (2015) discusses the extent to which the inclusion of Tatamkhulu Afrika’s 1990 poem ‘Nothing’s Changed’ within the ‘Other Cultures’ strand of AQA’s revised, GCSE-level NEAB Anthology prescribed particular reading approaches. Srivastava (2010) highlights the significance of English-language anthologies of South Asian writing. Mason (1998) and Walkowitz (1999) consider the ambivalent effects of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Primorac (2012) notes the democratising and localising force of entextualisation in the journal *New Writing on Zambia*.

main locus of meaning, analysis and (self-)representation” (Ahmad, 1992, p.93)? Alternatively, might the ‘postcolonial’ counterproductively commodify texts, and reproduce their marginal status in the global literary marketplace and in canons (see Brouillette, 2011, p.3)? Might the postcolonial a priori determine the text along national, cultural, ethnic or thematic lines, and therefore be an example of what Fredric Jameson (1986) calls ‘already-reading’? And “[c]an ‘postcolonial’ be understood as a brand” whose primary beneficiaries are critics themselves and the intellectual arena and economic sector which they create (Koegler, 2018, p.2)? Professional readings in the academy that identify an object of study called ‘postcolonial literature’ may actually reproduce (and even benefit from) the marginalising tendencies of the global literary marketplace.²⁵ The tendentiousness of the postcolonial and critics’ status as beneficiaries notwithstanding, we cannot underestimate the practical, political and aesthetic utility of the postcolonial, nor propose a necessarily better approach that does not compromise self-representation. Rather, we must acknowledge our role as critics in the interpretive foreclosure, marginalisation and monetisation of postcolonial literature (the discipline, not necessarily its objects of study), and recognise the wider institutional complicities that disciplinary shifts operate.

In a materialist vein, I should also highlight that postcolonial literatures are not widely read outside the academy. For one thing, illiteracy and intersecting socioeconomic factors can mean that many people simply do not read books.²⁶ Organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank and

²⁵ For a discussion of the limitations and specificities of professional postcolonial critique, see Procter (2009).

²⁶ I use the term ‘books’ advisedly. The printing press is of course a European import in many former colonies; privileging the book as the arbiter of literary culture risks delegitimising long histories of oral literature and oral literacy. Moreover, as Karin Barber has argued, the local production, circulation and reception of books across Africa challenge preconceived notions of the ‘book’ and of readerships (Barber, 2001, p.13; on non-print literary cultures, see also Hofmeyr and Kriel, 2006, pp.14-15; Fraser, 2008, p.166; Harris, 2019).

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) regularly release statistics which suggest that literacy around the world is generally fairly high and on the rise. Yet they define literacy in almost meaningless terms where the ability to read is concerned. According to the OECD, for example, Level 1 literacy pertains to those who can “successfully complete reading tasks that require reading relatively short texts to locate a single piece of information, which is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the question or directive and in which there is little competing information” (OECD, 2016, p.21). The World Bank, which boasts of 64% literacy in sub-Saharan Africa and 71% in South Asia, for example, utilises an even narrower definition of literacy. Its data comes from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, which defines literacy as the ability to “read and write with understanding a short, simple statement about one’s everyday life in any written language”, and which by their own admission is an imperfect measure of actual literacy (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). Across the globe, then, many people are not sufficiently literate to read books. Moreover, because measures of literacy obscure the politics of language by ignoring differences between literacy in more and less prestigious languages, and even reproduce prestige by discounting unrecognised national languages (see Fraser, 2008, pp.167-168), it cannot identify the proportion of people literate in the languages of literatures.

Additionally, when readers do possess sufficient literacy to read books, and moreover when they choose to do so,²⁷ they do not necessarily read literatures characterised as ‘postcolonial’. In recent years, readers in the United Kingdom have developed an appetite for crime fiction (Hannah, 2018; Squires, 2012; p.102); romantic

²⁷ We do not always choose whether or not to read. As I highlight in the final section of Chapter 4, even the middle classes are systematically denied opportunities to read through overwork and ensuing exhaustion.

fiction and children's literature are also bestselling genres (Bassnett, 2019).²⁸ Non-fiction is also popular, especially among Britons of South Asian heritage: 43% of British South Asians read self-help/motivational genres compared with 18% of the same sample of the United Kingdom population, when not ethnically-disaggregated; 52% read religious/spiritual books compared with 17% of the total population sample, and 29% read books about politics, compared with 15% of the total population sample (Squires, 2012, p.102).²⁹ Elsewhere, postcolonial literatures appear similarly unread. Exam preparation books, encyclopaedias and self-help genres are most popular in India (Fraser, 2008, p.169; see also Amazon India, 2019). Self-help is also popular in Nigeria (Griswold, 2000, pp.92-110) and in West Africa more broadly (Newell, 2010).³⁰ Ranka Primorac has shown that black Zambians regularly read self-help books, but also that they read a variety of genres for self-help (2012, p.507). A cursory account of publishing and reading data therefore suggests that many people may have limited contact with literatures consecrated as 'postcolonial' by the academy.

Materialist conceptions of cultural production and circulation have clear implications for the ways we think about reading postcolonial literatures. First, the spatio-economic distribution of the publishing industry means that the circulation and consumption of literature is inequitable. The South reads a lot of the North; the North reads some of the South, but that which it reads is often filtered by metropolitan multinational corporations who favour texts that align with foreign values and tastes, and which are written in or translated into English. Second, the global publishing industry at

²⁸ Note that statistics on reading habits can be notoriously unreliable because readers often inaccurately report their preferred books and genres in order to gain cultural prestige (Bassnett, 2019; see also O'Connor, 2019).

²⁹ On this basis, Squires argues that the Booker Prize's prizing of non-white and diasporic writers belies the diversity of genres people actually read (beyond 'literary' fiction) as well as the lack of diversity in the publishing industry itself (2012, p.100).

³⁰ See Fraser (2008, p.166) for an important critique of Griswold's methodology.

times alters and seeks alterations to manuscripts, offering up variously more sanitary, more sensational and more palatable reading experiences to foreign audiences. Third, writers sometimes assimilate publishers' perceptions of the values of target audiences; though, in so doing, they may intend to solicit greater awareness of cultural biases amongst readers, they are not always successful and can have the opposite effect of inspiring orientalist and exotic modes of perception and more robust notions of cultural difference. Fourth, paratexts – including the institutionalisation of literature as 'postcolonial' – can solicit forms of 'already-reading' (Jameson, 1986) along not just national, but cultural, ethnic and racial lines. Consequently, reading is sometimes less engaged in contesting abiding ethnic, racial and socioeconomic inequalities than it is implicated (if involuntarily) in the perpetuation of difference and inequitable global relations. Finally, postcolonial literatures are not widely read. 'Literacy' does not necessarily entail the ability to read books. Even if a reader is very literate, they may not have access to books in the language of their literacy, nor may they choose to read postcolonial literatures.

Correspondingly, materialist critiques dispute individuals' ability to enact 'postcolonial' readings, and in some cases the existence of properly postcolonial texts. For example, if we follow Boehmer in understanding the postcolonial text "as a score for reading" (2018, p.7), the compromises encoded in its production hitherto illustrated dispute the ability of even "the ideal postcolonial critic" (2018, p.10) to "activat[e] the political energies of postcolonial texts to resist, concatenate, and reshape worlds, and, where necessary, begin anew" (2018, p.15). Amongst materialist scholars and book historians, it is not at all clear that individual texts possess political, transformative energies following their contentious production journeys. Materialist scholars insist on postcolonial critics' own structural implication in systems of disenfranchisement and

commodification. As Huggan perceptively notes: “postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products” (2001, p.6).³¹ Postcolonialists engage in different kinds of reading, including Marxist-inflected readings, as if reading is “the appropriate form of politics” (Ahmad, 1992, p.3), while “rarely address[ing] the question of [this ‘radical’ act’s] own determination by the conditions of its production and the class location of its agents” (Ahmad, 1992, p.5). In other words, the professionalised discipline of postcolonialism is sometimes (if involuntarily) celebrated as an end in itself. There is a reluctance to interrogate the extent to which our (literary) critiques of imperialism and colonialism may form part of a bourgeois project.³²

These investigations into the global literary marketplace’s consequences for the production, circulation and reception of literatures called postcolonial clearly challenge some of postcolonial literary studies’ leading assumptions – including that professional readings are necessarily superior to ill-defined notions of popular reading, and that reading more broadly can involve the identification and empowerment of postcolonial dispositions. It is perhaps surprising, then, that they have as a corollary, the advocacy of hyper-self-conscious and self-critical readings. The registration of ethical risks associated with reading and the attendant development of (more) ethical reading strategies is perceived as capable of mitigating our abiding complicity as readers with the industry of postcoloniality and of recognising and circumventing a subjugating form of

³¹ On the institutionalisation of a brand of postcolonial critique, see also Gikandi’s critique of “the metropolitan scene of reading” (2000, p.92). On the institutionalisation of critique in general, see Felski (2015, pp.118-122). Felski differentiates between criticism (more aesthetically- or textually-minded) and critique (a more Marxist-informed aesthetics). The distinction is not important here, however, because, though critique more determinedly identifies itself as anti-institutional (and is therefore surprisingly institutional), both criticism and critique are mainstream in Felski’s terms.

³² Spivak notably sustains institutional self-critique across her work. She has also actively sought to democratise the perceived value of ‘an aesthetic education’ through work in Birbhum, West Bengal. This fieldwork “is less interested in fostering literacy than in training teachers and students to read for literariness – which is to say, to sustain an ethics of reading that might politicize them” (Toth, 2019, p.11). Yet, as I show, Spivak is insufficiently self-critical; she advocates the assimilation of a highly professionalised brand of reading among young Bengali children, and problematically prizes a very particular experience of the ‘literary’ (see Toth, 2019, pp.16-18).

interpretation. Sarah Brouillette has criticised this tendency in fellow materialist Graham Huggan (2007, pp.24-25). But John McLeod (2017) has noted that Sarah Brouillette, too, moves from a concern with the politics of cultural production and reception, to an interest in developing an attentive ethics that might vindicate both the discipline and its objects of study. As McLeod expertly highlights, Brouillette is interested precisely in the ethics that political excavations of the literary marketplace make possible. Her work is silently undergirded by the question: “How might the [materialist and political] (self-)narrativization of the postcolonial critic’s guilt-ridden standpoint keep open a vital [textualist, and ethically-] critical traction on their part amid their circumscription by economies of disempowerment?” (McLeod, 2017, p.106).³³ Materialist critics can therefore sometimes arrive at precisely the same conclusions as textualists when it comes to reading: they advocate for greater self-consciousness, self-reflexivity and even guilt among readers/critics lest they unknowingly reproduce the very structural inequalities they aspire to analyse.³⁴

Materialist critics’ abiding interest in more ethical reading approaches has two key implications. First, it blurs ethics and politics, a point to which we will return in the next section. Second, it privileges a variety of professional postcolonial reading, deemed capable of evading the strictures of the marketplace and of avoiding the pitfalls of reading and critique. As Caroline Koegler has astutely noted, “these acknowledgements of postcolonial critics’ implication in markets appear to function primarily as a form of (defensive) self-legitimation” (2018, p.5). This is to say, such self-conscious and self-critical approaches may be motivated less by the need to identify and inhabit more ethical

³³ Brouillette herself has admitted that she “remain[s] on the side of something like paranoid reading, despite having little faith of the ‘faith in demystifying exposure’ that [Eve Kosofsky] Sedgwick says is part of the paranoid mode [in *Touching Feeling* (2002)]” (Brouillette, 2019).

³⁴ Anker and Felski identify attentiveness and self-consciousness as endemic to literary critique more broadly (see 2017, p.8).

or more political locations from which to read postcolonial literatures, than they are by disciplinary demands to appear to do so. If we agree that “there is an inescapable tendency on the part of those whose professional lives center on literature to exaggerate its potency as a political weapon” (Attridge, 2004, p.8), then we must also recognise the critical tendency to overestimate the ethical and/or political potential of professional readings – at times, precisely by embedding acts of self- and institutional-critique in practices of reading.

The problem with material postcolonialisms is not just scholars’ promotion of a self-conscious and self-critical ethics of reading-as-politics, nor that this represents a kind of “(defensive) self-legitimation”. Textualist approaches may well tend to ignore the material and institutional circumstances that enable reading, and which might compromise the efficacy of idealised professional reading strategies perceived as amenable to the project of postcolonialism. But properly materialist approaches can foreclose postcolonial potential entirely. The adoption of a materialist, political approach, even if it subsequently manifests characteristically textual-ethical interfaces like self-consciousness and guilt, seems to involve resigning one’s self to reproducing the political conditions of the present, including global inequalities. It works from the premise of the uneven relationship between readers and texts, and therefore forfeits opportunities for a socially and epistemically transformative reading experience through which differences and the perceptions of differences can be renegotiated or whereby the reader and the text might enter into more reciprocal relations. If we follow materialist postcolonialisms and understand the text as either a commodity or a mirror of (foreign) publishers’ ideals or readers’ hypotheses, we foreclose its meaning and value, and we prevent the text from affecting us as readers or effecting change in how we view the world. This is consistent with Spivak’s description of foreclosure, following Lacan, as “the idea of a rejection of

affect” (1999, p.4). We cannot dispute materialist concerns that postcolonial literatures remain largely unread by huge swathes of the global population. But materialist critics’ recognition of the text as the already-read or an object of consumption devalues entirely the act of reading. Defining the postcolonial potential of isolated texts by their production and circulation journeys disregards the uniqueness of the reading encounter and texts’ (albeit ambivalent) potential to move readers in both senses: emotionally, and also transformatively moved to act or to change perception. When “the determinants of meaning are thought to be found elsewhere [than with individual reading agents],” in histories of colonial exploitation and dispossession or today’s global commodification of culture for example, we are left with no choice but “to distrust or disregard the experience of reading and to focus attention on contexts whose workings are assumed to be directing, controlling, or determining it even when the reader is unaware of them” (Armstrong, 2011, p.90). Though registering our implication in global systems of inequity is clearly an important part of conceptualising how reading takes place, materialist systemic analyses can underestimate the extent to which readers behave as individuals with particular experiential and epistemic resources (see Chapter 4 on the diverse readings offered by African and non-African readers, for example). The act of “privileging the contexts governing the moment of production” is tantamount to “rob[bing] the situation of writing of its historicity by suppressing its futurity”, which is to say “[i]gnoring a text’s unpredictable destiny in the experiences of readers yet to come” (Armstrong, 2011, p.94). In their identification of black writers and white publishers, or Western’ readerships and African readerships, systemic analyses can conceal individuals’ diverse relationship with collective categories of identity. As Fraser insists, readers are not only “frequently diasporic beings whose tastes have been formed by travel, social change, disparities of social outlook and the multiple ironies springing from these ubiquitous facts”, but the

interpretive communities to which they belong, their reading practices, repertoires and tastes also move and change (Fraser, 2008, p.186; see also Chapter 3, in which I find that diasporic British and American readers are notably empathetic toward the *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lover's* protagonist, Z).

To bring together this section's discussion of textualist and materialist scholarship on reading then, I have proposed that, in their theorisations of reading, both critical traditions attenuate the postcolonial agencies they admirably seek to locate and facilitate. Textualist critiques fail to account for the compromises encoded in the production, circulation and reception of postcolonial literatures, overestimate the resistant capabilities of both readers and texts, and in so doing conceal the problems of objectification, appropriation and commodification associated with both non-professional and professional readings of postcolonial literatures. By valorising professional readings, and ignoring the contingency of reading, textualist contributions "serve to both magnify and mask the implications of reading *itself*" (Procter, 2009, p.181). Materialist critiques, meanwhile, seem to resign themselves to authors', publishers' and readers' objectification, appropriation and commodification of postcolonial literature. They underestimate readers' individual agencies during reading, and consequently the ways in which they may be moved during reading or bring things to the activity that moves the text. Likewise, they forget that, in the hands of readers, texts do things – including things that their production journeys may seem to foreclose. As Attridge puts it: "literature [...] is effective, even if its effects are not predictable enough to serve a political or moral program" (2004, p.4). Additionally, both textualist and materialist responses can be criticised for eschewing a meaningful interaction with the various performances of reading that take place around the world.

Based on this patient discussion of reading according to textualist and materialist paradigms, I propose in summary that both critical traditions distort the process of reading which is necessarily material and textual. We are always reading from somewhere, with historically-situated knowledges and experiences; but we are also always reading for somewhere else, encountering and undergoing knowledges and experiences that are other to us. This is because texts are ontologically ambivalent. Literatures are material and textual: their narratives variously evoke cultural histories and operate within extant epistemologies, but they also disrupt and transform the categories through which we think reality – often in way that they themselves do not conceive. The task I take up in the next section, then, is to develop a theory of reading that can account for the hybridised – dialectical – nature of reading as material and textual, but which simultaneously accommodates the diversity of reading. As a corollary, this theory of reading as dialectical also recognises the dialectical relationship between ethics and politics; in so doing, and to recall my earlier suspension of John McLeod’s findings, it comprehends Sarah Brouillette’s difficulty in articulating a politics of reading without recourse to ethics.

1.2. A Theory of Reading Postcolonial Literatures

This section first develops reader response theory’s implicit understanding of reading as affective and hybrid. It also highlights that reader-response theory embeds a sophisticated understanding of the dialectical nature of the ethics and politics of reading. Wolfgang Iser recognises that we can be moved toward a recognition of our political situation through our participation in ethical acts of reimagination. Conversely, he appreciates that our ethical engagement with texts is informed by our location and the politics of reading. In order to draw together these ideas about reading, this section conceptualises readers as made up of a reading self and a self-in-the-world, which exist in dialectical, affective

tension. This theory of reading does not advocate or seek to standardise a particular reading, as we have seen is typical among textualist postcolonialists especially. Instead, it is an attempt to describe how we actually read postcolonial literatures. In this spirit, my theory of reading recognises variety in reading. It can even account for readings of postcolonial literatures which are not postcolonial – for example, which engage in forms of othering, or in pernicious empathetic identifications. By describing rather than prescribing reading, this theory of reading democratises the reading of postcolonial literatures in the service of a greater understanding of how reading takes place.

Let us first trace key ideas about reading in Iser's work. During reading, Iser writes, and "[a]s text and reader thus merge into a single situation, the division between subject and object no longer applies, and it therefore follows that meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced" (1978, pp.9-10).³⁵ Iser posits that meaning is the third term in a dialectical phase between readers and texts. In so doing, he destabilises the reader-text paradigm and alludes to the text's agency. Crucially, this co-produced meaning is unstable; it is an effect of readers' and texts' affective coming-together. Their merging in the process of meaning-making displaces their fundamental separateness, and exposes them to their proximity, reciprocity and potential connectedness. It reminds readers that "the designation of an 'I' or 'we' requires an encounter with others" (Ahmed, 2000, p.7), thereby rendering difference processual and as the affective node through which bodies (subject and object) become. This conception of reading embeds both textualism and materialism. It pays attention to the ways in which

³⁵ I determinedly pluralise both 'readers' and 'texts' as well as 'acts of reading' as part as my effort to recover the diversity and contingency of reading. Exceptions to this include those moments when I elaborate readers and the reading process in detail, and when I seek to be consistent with preceding and proceeding quotations. This approach is motivated by Grobe's criticism of reader-response theory. He has argued that reader-response theory eschews the variety of actual and possible readings in its unifying language of "'the reader' or of 'the act of reading'" which "proceed[s] on the assumption that our differences, though great, [are] as nothing compared to our similarities" (2016, p.568).

we move to join texts during reading, and, notwithstanding, the ways in which this movement is conditioned by differences between ourselves and the texts we read.

I have described reading as affective. Whilst I am in agreement with Gregg and Seigworth that “[t]here is no single, generalizable theory of affect” (2010, p.3), a working definition might read that affect is *feeling-differently*. It is a sensation between ‘bodies’ other than that which is prescribed.³⁶ Affect helps us to understand how and why texts move us. But importantly, it neither attributes causality to readers and texts, nor extrapolates human bodies or agencies from texts, or sublimates texts’ imaginatively re(-)presented humans or subjects to (representative) actual human/subject status. My conception of the affects of reading conceives of texts’ *actorhood* (Latour, 2005), or their *thing-power* (Bennett, 2010). By articulating reading as affective and texts as actors, I align myself with Felski’s advocacy of greater “reflecti[on] on what [the text] unfurls, calls forth, makes possible”, and ultimately “a recognition – long overdue – of the text’s status as a co-actor: as something that makes a difference, that helps makes [sic] things happen” (2015, p.12). An abiding sensitivity to the affects of reading is important insofar as it recovers the singularity of the act of engaging with a text.

Affect is not just a kind of *feeling-differently*, but is understood as offering the potential of *being-differently*. Affects “can serve to drive us toward movement, toward

³⁶ Freud influentially describes affect as non-sensory and quantitative (or non-representational) forms of perception, which receive their value as emotions and drives, and whose energy is oriented toward the abiding achievement of pleasure (see Solms and Nersessian, 1999, pp.1-10). Affect is an internal process that propels the subject toward visceral change and toward different kinds of emotional behaviour, designed to effect change in the external world (Solms and Nersessian, 1999, p.12). Since Freud, theorists have differently conceptualised the prescriptive sensations against which affects works. For example, Silvan Tomkins (1962; 1963; 1991) and others informed by psychoanalysis continue to differentiate affects from drives. Following Tomkins, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick understands affect as opposed to prohibitive structures of power and the atomisation of individuals those structures invoke: for her, affect is an invitation to acknowledge our communion with others (2002, pp.1-25). Gilles Deleuze (1997; 2003 with Brian Massumi) distinguishes affect from emotion, emotion being the normative relational capacity of bodies/things. Relatedly, Massumi puts forward affect as an acknowledgement of the connection between movement and sensation (2002, p.1-3), as an asignifying mode of experience that is ‘prepersonal’ (2003, xvi), and thus a form of emergent political relations (2015). Albeit via different routes, then, theorists coalesce at the same entry point: affect is understood as feeling-differently.

thought and extension” (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.1): they transformatively move us.³⁷ We can perhaps observe this most clearly in Gregg and Seigworth’s conceptualisation of affect as a body’s being “pulled beyond its seeming surface-boundedness” and becoming “*as much outside itself as in itself* – webbed in its relations – until ultimately *such firm distinctions* [of self and other] *cease to matter*” (2010, p.3; emphasis added). Affect dissolves the division between the subject and the object; in the eminently dialectical encounter between a subject and an object, both become other than what they were.³⁸ This description of affect is strikingly consonant with Iser’s description of reading through which “text and reader [...] merge into a single situation, [wherein] the division between subject and object no longer applies” (1978, pp.9-10). Reading appears to be, for Iser, an affective activity. To incorporate the language of affect more forcefully within Iser’s account of reading, we might just as well concur that “meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an [affect, or range of affects] to be experienced” (Iser, 1978, p.10). An understanding of reading as affective poses a challenge to existing paradigms of reading that affirm rational (self-)critique, while also registering the extent to which particular affects (such as guilt) have been assimilated by the industry of professional critique. It pays attention to the ways in which literatures unpredictably move us, and us them. And it seeks to acknowledge – and re-evaluate the ethical and political efficacy of – a broader range of affects than is typically endorsed in professional circuits.

Reader-response theory is tacitly undergirded by a notion of affect. This is clearest in Iser’s conception that the act of reading generates a ‘liminal space’. The liminal space

³⁷ We can locate an understanding of affect as *feeling-differently* and *being-differently* across influential thinkers in the field, particularly in the Deleuzian strand of affect theory. Massumi effectively posits affect between potentially iterable points as “the notion of a taking-form” (2002, p.9). Deleuze and Guattari similarly put it that “[a]ffects are becomings” (2003, p.256), and Braidotti (2011) maintains this quasi-definition.

³⁸ Affects happen variously in the social sphere. In *Vibrant Matter*, for example, Jane Bennett speaks of being moved toward a different kind of self-recognition and self-expression through an encounter with “*that rat, that configuration of pollen, that otherwise utterly banal, mass-produced plastic water-bottle cap*” (2010, p.4; original emphasis).

is a translatory interface which both differentiates a given reader and text and inspires them to negotiate their different horizons (Iser, 2000, pp.5-6). It keeps in play dualities between subject matter and register, or between a text and its comprehension, even as it “replace[s] all overriding orientations such as authority” (Iser, 2000, p.48).³⁹ The liminal space acknowledges difference, and the possibility of overcoming difference. In this sense, it testifies to the materialism and textualism of reading.

Iser’s sense of reading’s immanent hybridity is clearest in his elaboration of reading as an exercise in recursion. He clarifies that reading requires readers to deploy their specific epistemic and experiential resources, which are related to their material and cultural location, in materialist undertakings. But he also demonstrates that reading necessitates the suspension, negotiation, and reconstitution of the self’s archive in imaginative, textualist acts. To quote Iser, reading sees that “a prediction, anticipation, or even projection is corrected insofar as it has failed to square with what it has targeted” (Iser, 2002, p.85). Readers “predict” or “project” texts’ meanings via their existing horizons of knowledge and their “treasure-house of experience” (Iser, 1978, p.24). This is materialism. But texts “correct” them, either by thwarting expectations or by way of indeterminacy, and provide readers with opportunities to revise and constitute their vantage points in order to realise meaning. This is textualism. Iser is clear that such processes of recursion occur throughout the time-flow of reading.

Readers may be encouraged to adapt and reconstitute themselves and their archives of knowledge and experience in order to ‘communicate’ with texts and participate in the production of their meanings. But, importantly, Iser never goes as far as to suggest that readers’ movements see them permanently united with texts or their mutual

³⁹ In this way, Iser’s articulation of the liminal space retains liminality’s original meaning. In Victor Turner’s ‘Liminality and Communitas’, ‘liminality’ refers to a space of affective becoming, which is generated by, but momentarily suspends social formations (see 1977, pp.95-96).

differences eradicated. Even as readers are persuaded to move toward a given text, and to take up the singular standpoint it offers, “[their] own disposition will never disappear totally; it will tend instead to form the background to and a frame of reference for the act of grasping and comprehending” (Iser, 1978, p.37). This is a crucial caveat through which Iser acknowledges the abiding *politics of reading*. Readers’ movement is predicated on their existing positionality, including their material location, their cultural inheritances, their epistemic horizons, their bodily experiences, and their existing relationships to literature, reading and literary culture. As Paul B. Armstrong puts it: “[e]ven when one seems to be reading most freely and imaginatively, [...] one’s subjectivity is enacting the potentialities of subject positions that one has learned to inhabit and that may vary socially, culturally, and historically” (Armstrong, 2011, p.95). Reading is both material and situated, and textual and transformative. The material and the textual pole interact in affective ways. Acts of textualism affectively generate ethical possibilities, which are themselves affected by the political exigencies affectively engendered by acts of materialism. Especially in my articulation, then, reader-response theory identifies a *politics of reading* and its interaction with an *ethics of reading*.

Over the years, critics have variously defined both the politics and ethics of reading, in often mutually incompatible ways. In order to navigate the many iterations of politics and ethics, and define the terms consistently, I follow Peter D. McDonald’s (2010) clarifying remarks. Based on a careful reading of J. Hillis Miller – W. J. T. Mitchell debate, McDonald posits that the ethics of reading originates with the real situation of reading, which, quoting Miller, “‘begins with and returns to the man or woman face to face with the words on the page’ (4)” (McDonald, 2010, p.489). The ethics of reading are premised on the individuality and singularity of readers, texts and the event of reading. In this way, the ethics of reading depend on close reading: “[ethics’] primary

obligation will be or ought to be [...] a love for language, a care for language and for what language can do” (Miller, 1987, p.190). The ethics of reading clearly imply a textualist engagement with texts. We might intuit that reader-response theory is principally ethical in as much as it prioritises aesthetic structure, and the effects of indeterminacy and singularity on readers. Likewise, reader-response theory’s guiding principle that reading entails that experiencing the other as the self, and the self as the other in the co-construction of meaning coheres with J. Hillis Miller’s notion that the ethics of reading recognise that “literature gives access to a virtual reality not otherwise knowable” (2002, p.81). Whereas the ethics of reading are located with the singular meaning-making act between a reader and a text – an arguably ahistorical and “disembodied” situation, as McDonald points out (2010, p.489) – the politics of reading are situated responses to the particular socio-historical dynamics of reading. Quoting Said, McDonald suggests that the politics of reading are underpinned by questions such as ““Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances?”” (McDonald, 2010, p.487) as well as “who reads[?]”, “who publishes?”, “[f]or whom is the publishing being done?”, and “[i]n what circumstances?” (McDonald, 2010, p.490). The politics of reading thus take into account race, ethnicity, class, gender and nationality, while also paying attention to the locations in which reading takes place (for example, in Leeds or Guangzhou; in the University seminar, the home, or the beach) as well as the locations in which readings are made public (for example, in New Delhi or Harare; in a paywalled journal, an online forum, or the pub).⁴⁰ The politics of reading entail eminently materialist engagements with text. Though certainly the politics of reading are less developed within reader-response theory, we can identify their latent importance to Iser in his acknowledgement of “real reader[s]’ own beliefs” and their possession and mobilisation of “whole

⁴⁰ Certain locations also foreclose or render irrelevant particular readings (Stockwell, 2002, pp.2-3)

repertoire[s] of historical norms and values” during reading (Iser, 1978, p.37).⁴¹ The specificity of readers matters here.

Earlier, I stated that *Iser recognises the politics of reading and its interaction with an ethics of reading*. By this, I mean that reader-response theory does not merely incorporate ethical and political aspects, but that it tacitly characterises the politics and ethics of reading as dialectical. The ethics of reading implies the politics of reading; the politics of reading implies the ethics of reading. Let us take time here to explain this as clearly as possible. For Iser, reading is a socio-historically situated act between a reader with particular coordinates and their “own treasure-house of experience” (Iser, 1978, p.24) and, by reverse logic, a text with a particular social, historical and cultural genealogy of production. Yet, reading is also singular and arresting: its interactive occasion can transport readers and texts beyond the world and existing conceptions of the social. This paradox does not concern Iser, precisely because it is not perceived as a paradox. The notion of reading as historically-situated or political is premised on the ethics of reading, particularly the affective re-recognition of one’s self through the self-othering horizon of the text. The notion of reading as ethical is similarly dependent on the politics of reading, of being aware of where one was first stationed in order to know how far one has travelled. To adapt Iser’s own description of reading as dialectical, “the familiar [or the political conditions of our existence] facilitates our comprehension of the unfamiliar [the situation presented in the text to which we are ethically obliged], but the unfamiliar [the situation in the text to which we are ethically obliged] in turn restructures our comprehension of the familiar [the political conditions of our existence]” (Iser, 1978, p.94). Ethics and politics are thus inseparable: the liminal space of meaning both joins us

⁴¹ On Iser and the politics of reading, see also Fluck (2000, pp.177-183) on the historical origins of Iser’s thought in post-war Germany, and the necessity amongst bourgeois Germans to gain critical distance from the politics of Nazism.

with and separates us from the text. Politics provides access to ethics, and ethics provides access to politics. On ethics via politics, it is commonsense that we make sense of new ideas and experiences through the mobilisation of knowledges and experiences that we already possess. And on politics via ethics, for example, Iser presents literature “[a]s an instrument for staging various kinds of open-ended [ethical] exploratory interactions” that are ultimately irreducible to existing relations of power such that reading can be seen to “mak[e] possible the reciprocal but nonconsensual exchange of [political] power on which democratic mutuality depends” (Armstrong, 2000, p.211; see also Iser, 1993, pp.7-8 on the text as “a criticism of life”).⁴² What John McLeod has described as Sarah Brouillette’s (2007) operation of a “guilty conscience and critical self-consciousness” in the service of politics (McLeod, 2017, p.106) also tallies with this politics-via-ethics approach.

We have now developed reader-response theory’s comprehension of the affects of reading. We have identified reader-response theory’s conception of reading’s intrinsic, material *and* textual hybridity. Finally, we have acknowledged reader-response theory’s articulation of the ethics and politics of reading as intersecting and dialectical. I now draw together an understanding of reading as hybrid, affective, and ethically- and politically-operative, and assess the implications of this theory of reading for the reading of postcolonial literatures. In order to do so, I radically revise our conception of the reader as constituted by a reading self and a self-in-the-world.

When we think of the reader, let us consider their constitution as reading self and self-in-the-world. The self-in-the-world denotes the reader as a cognate, corporeal agent.

⁴² As I have shown elsewhere, J. Hillis Miller and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak share this understanding of the relationship between ethics and politics: “For Miller and Spivak alike, the formal properties of texts can move us toward a range of ethical interfaces (reciprocity, self-critique, confrontation) and associated dispositions (empathy, shame, anger) that might inspire us to critically imagine new forms of political relations or even enact prosocial action” (Toth, 2019, p.6).

It possesses material and epistemic coordinates as well as memories of experience. The self-in-the-world's acts of reading are premised on and inflected by its particular comprehension of the self and the world. The reading self refers to the persona we adopt when we read. It is our imaginative actualisation of the roles offered up to us by the text. The reading self participates in the suspension of the self and the world in the service of the text's other universe. This distinction between the self-in-the-world and the reading self is not the same as that which Iser makes between the 'real reader' and the 'implied reader', where the real reader refers to the actual recipient of the text, and the implied reader to "a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient" which is necessarily inside the text (Iser, 1978, p.34). My notion of a reading self and a self-in-the-world instead seeks to differentiate between the readers' specific realisation of the implied reader in any given text, and readers' abiding material, historical and cultural associations, and their knowledges and experiences. In this way, I follow Armstrong's understanding of reading as stimulating a "splitting or doubling that differentiates subjectivity from the subject positions it enacts" (Armstrong, 2011, p.95). Reading involves the self (or the self-in-the-world), but is also a performance of self (through the reading self). The reading self and the self-in-the-world are therefore readerly vantage points with differing agencies and proximities to the text in question from which to conceive of the text's own vantage points. The reading self textualises. The self-in-the-world materialises.

Importantly, readers do not proceed through texts via the reading self or the self-in-the-world in isolation. Reading is dialectically organised. When we take up the guise of the reading self, a sense of our self-in-the world "will never disappear totally" (Iser, 1978, p.37). Only because readers hold on to their self-in-the-world, and the knowledges and experiences by which it is constituted, can the text's meaning, "which has no existence of its own [...] come into being by way of ideation" (Iser, 1978, p.38). Texts

rely on the reading self in order to make themselves ‘heard,’ but they must affect the self-in-the-world, too, if they are to mean something beyond their organising structures. It is the self-in-the-world that facilitates the ‘translation’ of texts’ imaginaries into the present, and that has the potential to form meaning, and have meaning formed, anew. “The necessity of playing a role” – of proceeding by way of the reading self – “makes reading (like any other norm-governed social activity) a doubled experience of ‘me’ and ‘not me’”, where ‘me’ refers to a pre-existing subjecthood as self-in-the-world and ‘not me’ refers to a world- and self-suspending reading self (Armstrong, 2011, p.95). This means that “the self is paradoxically present to itself only by acting as another”, a situation that variously inspires alienation, empowerment, transformation and innovation “that would be impossible either if the self were unified and monolithic or if the role to which one is hailed [for example, by the implied reader or production history] were all controlling” (Armstrong, 2011, pp.95-96). Put simply, “[b]ecause reading is a doubled experience of staging oneself as another, it can move us in ways we may not anticipate and may feel we do not completely control” (Armstrong, 2011, p.96). The sensation of movement – of affect – is perceptible only insofar we as readers inhabit two horizons at once (associated with the self-in-the-world and the reading self), and develop an interstitial vantage point through which to perceive the distance between them and process the text. Reading is thus the location of the “[t]he performative dimension of subject creation”: it prompts the re(-)production of subject (Armstrong, 2011, p.96). The “potential in the text [...] triggers the re-creative dialectics in the reader” between the reading self and the self-in-the-world (Iser, 1978, p.30).

My consideration of the reader as composed of the reading self and the self-in-the-world accounts for the at once material and textual characteristics of reading. It enables us to regard the transformative, aesthetic possibilities of reading at the same time

as the material circumstances of cultural production and consumption. The reading self accounts for the textual dimensions of reading, and the ways in which reading entails producing one's self and one's immediate horizon of experience as other. It transmits affects, which make possible ethical interfaces like empathy, which may bring about imperatives for self-reconstitution. The self-in-the-world extends the material impetus of reader-response theory, and entails our embeddedness in the political conditions of the present, including our knowledges and experiences as well as our material, linguistic and literary-cultural access to reading and systems of cultural evaluation. It transmits affects which enable proto-political forms of self-recognition, including recognition of the way in which the self is institutionalised and implicated in systems beyond its own volition. My notion of a composite reader therefore respects the many possible material, cultural and epistemic differences between readers and texts whilst also attending to the way in which they might, through reading, imaginatively renegotiate those differences. To reiterate, this model of readers is not intended as a more ethical and more political invention, but rather as a more accurate model for the textualities and materialities of reading.

Together, the reading self and the self-in-the-world occupy and move between the material and the textual. We might visualise this as the text requiring that the reader maintain one foot in the world whilst stretching the other foot out to the fictional or unknown universe. With this in mind, if we think about the reader and the text in relation to the conventional subject-object paradigm, we have a composite subject (the reader) that is not separate from the object (the text) but, rather, both inside and outside the text, according to the movement of the reading self and the self-in-the-world. This might remind us of Edward Said's notion of 'contrapuntal reading,' where, as George M. Wilson summarises, "interpreters move back and forth between an internal and external

standpoint on the work's imaginative project" (Wilson, 1994, p.266). However, unlike Said's internal-external reader, the reading self and self-in-the-world exist in dialectical tension; they interact and affect each other, mutually shaping their viewpoints as they strive to accommodate the material-textual impetuses of the text along the temporal axis of reading. Recalling Iser's recursion analogy, the reading self, as directed by the self-in-the-world (its other half), partially enters the text, moving along the temporal axis of reading (Fig.1). When the text brings the reading self up short, representing something which does not naturally accord with a frame the reading self already knows or has adopted for the purpose of reading, the reading self must return to the self-in-the-world (outside the text), consult its in-the-world knowledges and experiences, and at the same time induce that the self-in-the-world revise its standpoint. The reading self and the self-in-the-world co-develop an interstitial vantage point through which to read the text (Fig. 2). As the reading self and (by proxy) the text continually encourage the self-in-the-world to move or open up its frame of reference, the self-in-the-world is dislodged. And as it turns back to itself, or where it was once stationed, the self-in-the-world gains the opportunity to develop a new critical sensitivity with which to critique that site from whence it came (Fig. 3). In short, the text affects the reading self and the self-in-the-world to alter their relationship to the text and the world respectively: the reader "sets the work in motion and so sets himself in motion, too" (Iser, 1978, p.21). And this takes place periodically over the course of reading. The reading self and the self-in-the-world are both tested in subsequent dialectical phases with the text: "every moment of reading is a dialectic of pretension [imagining, associated with the reading self] and retention [remembering, associated with the self-in-the-world as well as what the self-in-the-world has already come to know through interactions with the reading self and proxied text]" (Iser, 1978, p.112). These dialectical phases "conve[y] a future horizon yet to be

occupied, along with a past (and continually fading) horizon already filled” (Iser, 1978, p.112).

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

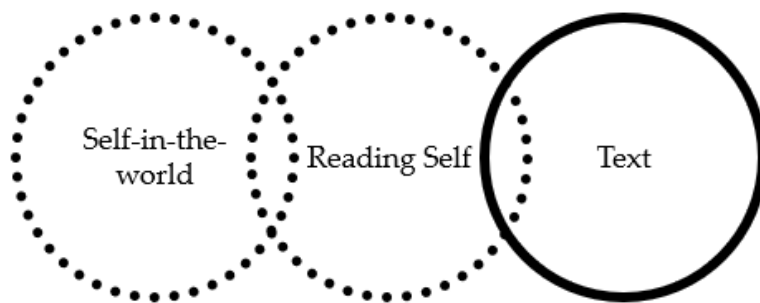
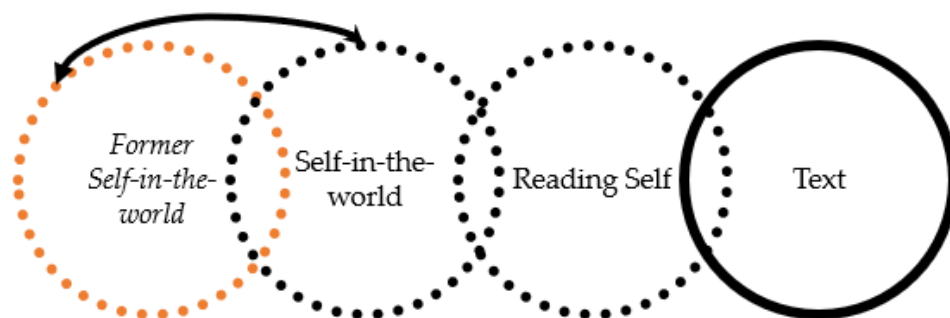


Fig. 3



This inside-outside formation of the reader thus allows us to harness the relational potential of ethics and politics simultaneously. In as much as it draws attention to the text’s role in affecting the perspective of, first, the reading self and, second, the self-in-the-world, this model also troubles material accounts of the uneven distribution of power

that characterises cultural consumption. Indeed, this model of reading is consistent with Homi Bhabha's account of social differences within commodity culture. In *The Location of Culture* (2004), he suggests that

it is legitimate to represent the relations of exploitation and domination in the discursive division between the First and Third World, the North and the South. Despite the claims to a spurious rhetoric of 'internationalism' on the part of the established multinationals and the networks of the new communications technology industries, such circulations of signs and commodities as there are, are caught in the vicious circuits of surplus value that link First World capital to Third World labour markets through the chains of the international division of labour, and national comprador classes. (Bhabha, 2004, pp.29-30)

For Bhabha, it is important to make visible the divergent material realities of different regions around the world and their historical origins in colonialist and global capitalist expansion. Binaries of First World and Third World, and Global North and Global South remain important for the registration of the dominant socioeconomic and political paradigms that govern global relations, especially the "circulations of signs and commodities" such as literary texts. His proposal here is in keeping with those of materialist postcolonialisms, reproduced earlier: the global literary marketplace is a kind of extractive industry wherein the consumption of texts from the Third World or Global South creates surplus value – not just economic, but cultural capital – in the First World or Global North.

Social differences are not merely assimilated by global capitalist reproduction, however. Also in *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha theorises the possibility of reconstructing social differences in mutually-affecting ways. He writes:

Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision and a construction – that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present. (Bhabha, 2004, p.4)

Bhabha here conceptualises difference as a dialogic event, which makes both terms intelligible to each other and themselves. His remarks can be mapped onto two intersecting differentiating activities: between the subject and the object, or self and other; and between the individual self and the self's collective identity. The notion that the one and the other share dialectical relations is consonant with Bhabha's notion of the interdependency of the First World and the Third World, and the Global North and the Global South. However, the circuitry in which the one and the other are caught, here, has far less predictable outcomes than merely reproducing unequal relations. In order to perceive the object, or claim its (collective) identity, the subject must go 'beyond' itself. For example, in order to assert belonging to the First World or the Third World, one must participate in the "project" of making these differences, and of aligning with an identity that is non-self-identical (it requires "[self-]revision and [self-]reconstruction"). Bhabha highlights this process in order to emphasise that subjects are always-already different than their historically-determined and collective identities. By rendering the processes underpinning social differences transparent, he seeks to show that we can intervene in the discursive production of difference. Put another way, Bhabha registers *the archive of 'the self'* with which we produce the other, and ourselves-as-other.⁴³ The 'beyond' space of difference, which is entailed in the self's adoption of a collective identity, proffers us an "interstitial perspective" from which we can in Renée Green's words, "step outside of [ourselves] to actually see what [we are] doing" (Bhabha, 2004, p.4). On seeing our

⁴³ I borrow the phrase, *archive of 'the self'*, from Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* (2002 [1989]), in which they use archive of 'the self' to foreground the paradoxical logic of distance and proximity by which the other is constructed. They write: "In order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the self, yet at the same time must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it. The Other can, of course, only be constructed of the archive of 'the self', yet the self must also articulate the Other as inescapably different" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002, p. 102). The archive of 'the self' is thus at once a distancing mechanism and a mechanism of control; in as much as it incorporates the other ontologically, it also denies the other the ability to self-signify and constructs it as an object. Of course, the archive of 'the self' also fictionalises the self and its differences from the other.

participation in the reproduction of difference, we may imagine new forms of community and identity, including ones that are more self-identical or which we would like to be more self-identical. The critical transition from a language of East/West to one of Global South/Global North in recent years arguably testifies to this process.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha thus calls for an attentiveness to “the relations of exploitation and domination” that define global commodity culture (2004, pp.29-30). But he also finds that social differences are partly independent of the capitalist world order or any “already authenticated cultural tradition”, and that acts of differentiation proffer opportunities for mutual “revision and reconstruction” (2004, p.4). Social relations are both predetermined (and material), and an ongoing project (and textual or discursive) in which there are opportunities to *become-different*, to evoke my articulation of affect. This hybrid understanding of social relations resonates with the hybridity embedded in my model of reading. For Bhabha, social relations and differences are both mediated by larger spatio-political and economic systems, and transcendent. My theory of reading similarly recognises through the self-in-the-world the extent to which we possess knowledges, experiences and social identities that are governed by the global capitalist world order and its depiction of social relations, and through the reading self our opportunities to co-create more plastic and equitable social relations with the text (as other). Indeed, it is telling that Iser articulates reading in striking accord with Bhabha’s description of social differences. The recursive character of reading, Iser writes, “does not mean that the past returns in full to the present, [...] but it does mean that memory undergoes a transformation. That which is remembered becomes open to new connections, and these in turn influence the expectations aroused” (Iser, 1978, p.111). The reading process moves the reading self in the modality of the perhaps toward a future in the text. The self-in-the-world subsequently interacts with and part-assimilates the

reading self's affective and interpretive interaction in the present. By manifesting a hybrid reading subject, the reading process "takes you 'beyond' yourself [in an ethical act toward the text] in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present" (Bhabha, 2004, p.4).

The reading self and the self-in-the-world's affective interaction along the temporal axis of reading endows acts of reading with a simultaneously revelatory and revisory potential: readers may participate in a divulgence of their cultural biases and privileges, and their origins in an archive of 'the self'; at the same time, they may also co-operate in a revision of their self-knowledge and constitution of the world in a way that contests or goes 'beyond' hardened patterns of thought and existence. This is not at all to suggest that all readers enjoy revelatory and revisory experiences with texts all of the time. Reading literatures called postcolonial may involve invoking imperial histories, reproducing cultural biases, and sharing prejudicial views; it may shore up notions of superiority and oppositional logics at large. Or it may inspire more pernicious empathetic identifications that seek mastery over the other, or which defer responsibility for prosocial action toward the other (Keen, 2007, xx). The liminal space makes possible the co-production of a range of affects and interpretations. To deploy Bhabha's description of the stairwell as a liminal space, the liminal space in which reading and meaning-making takes place is both "the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower [class], black and white" and "[t]he hither and thither [...], and the temporal movement and passage that it allows," which "prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities [...and] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 2004, p.5). The liminal space of meaning proffers almost infinite opportunities for making and re-making meaning in more and less material and textual ways – in ways that variously

prioritise the liminal space's identity as a "connective tissue" or as that which "constructs [...] difference". This is to say, reading may be more or less material or textual, and more or less ethically or politically-enabling. In this sense, it may be more or less postcolonially-inclined, if postcolonial reading practices are taken to involve "the contestation of colonial discourses" (McLeod, 2010, p.34). Understanding reading as a material-textual act that co-produces affects has the potential to resolve the problems of objectification, appropriation, domestication and commodification associated with reading postcolonial literatures precisely because it makes explicit texts' agency. However, by extending the possibilities of reading beyond professional critique, this model of reading also accommodates less and non-postcolonial readings, including those that undergird the power structures at the site of production. I maintain that this conceptual realignment is crucial however, because it democratises the reading of postcolonial literatures and works against notions of more ideal interpretive practices by making clear that we cannot prescribe reading or meaning (as I have shown is typical of materialist and textualist critics alike in their valorisation of particular interpretive strategies). In this conception of reading as affective, we recognise the text as an actor at the site of consumption, capable of inspiring and being inflected by multiple readings. This has to be the case, or we risk misplacing such responsibilities with individual authors, texts and critics, or delegitimising reading as it variously takes place (outside the academy).

1.3. Conclusion

This chapter has offered a detailed account of postcolonial studies' current engagement with reading. It shown that, ultimately, textualist and materialist approaches to reading tend to be mutually concerned with ideal reading. Their theories of reading struggle to

account for the ways we actually read. This chapter proceeded to develop an original theory of reading postcolonial literatures. This theory of reading made four key claims. First, reading is both textual *and* material. It takes place between what I have termed the reading self and the self-in-the-world. Second, insofar as each reader is constituted by a reading self and a self-in-the-world, the reading self's textual activities and the self-in-the-world's material activities constantly intersect. Third, reading is affective. At every juncture – between the text and reading self, the reading self and the self-in-the-world, between the self-in-the-world and the reading self, and the reading self and the text – affects continually take place. Fourth, the affects of reading generate interconnected ethical and political interfaces. Through the politics of reading, readers are able to recognise themselves and situate themselves in the world. Though this can shore up pernicious notions of difference, it can also entail the recognition of privilege and the archive of 'the self' with which they constitute themselves and others. Through the ethics of reading, readers can engage in acts of (self-)reimagination and (self-)reconstitution. This can involve the contestation of cultural biases and (neo)imperial discourses, even as it also makes possible cosmopolitan forms of empathy that might erase histories of empire and contemporary inequality. My theory of reading therefore both democratises the reading of postcolonial literatures, while also accounting for readings which are not postcolonial, where 'postcolonial' broadly refers to the contestation of empire's material and epistemic legacies. I now proceed to test and develop this theory of reading in the next three chapters, principally in order to show that (i) reading is hybrid, conditioned by intersecting material and textual activities, (ii) reading is diverse, and never wholly determined in advance by geopolitical location, class, religion, cultural affiliations, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender or any other social coordinate; (iii) reading is a form of non-understanding in its partiality.

2. Reading Responses to *The Satanic Verses* (1988)

This chapter argues that respondents within ‘the Rushdie Affair’ or ‘*The Satanic Verses* Affair’ have precluded an understanding of the process of reading, specifically its intrinsic material and textual dimensions. By focusing on “the most notorious instance of postcolonial reading to date” (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012b, p.17), I seek to establish reading as a simultaneously material and textual activity. Section One shows that contributors to the debate often link their readings to their cultural, religious and geopolitical identities. They overdetermine the relationship between identity and reading, and so foreclose alternative readings. Section Two argues that the cultural-religious narrative about ‘the affair’ obscures the way in which supporting and opposing readers can be seen to adopt particular orientations to the text: supporting readers are affected to primarily textualise it while opposing readers are moved to primarily materialise it. Both approaches are valid. But, importantly, both are inflected by their opposite: textualism relies on material resources, just as materialism relies on textual acts. Section Three shows that supporting critics and opposing critics alike are unable to sustain their avowedly monological readings. By close reading responses to the text in tandem with relevant passages from *The Satanic Verses*, we can observe the extent to which the text prompts material-textual responses, whose hybridity is merely denied by respondents either side of ‘the affair’. Section Four traces the text’s confusion of the material and the textual from the very first pages in order to offer one explanation as to why commentators struggle to sustain their readings. In the process, it also diversifies materialising and textualising operations, and disentangles materialism especially from cultural and religious identity.

2.1. A Cultural-Religious Affair

This section highlights the frequency with which *The Satanic Verses*' respondents link practices of reading to readers' cultural and religious associations as well as their geopolitical coordinates. The novel's most vocal opponents tend to identify themselves as Muslim, even suggesting that outrage is the only viable response among Muslims. Supporters of the novel reinforce this idea, constructing Muslims as an opposing interpretive community, and proceeding to characterise Islam as antithetical to principles of rational discussion and freedom of expression as well as Western and British values more broadly. Reading becomes an act of identity construction. In fact, two orthodoxies of reading emerge: Muslims must deplore the novel in order to perform their faith, while non-Muslims must celebrate its being a bastion of free speech in order to signal their secular, liberal values and, sometimes, their Britishness. These orthodoxies of reading conceal interpretive variety and severely limit the affects of reading.

The consecration of a unified Muslim response to *The Satanic Verses* was aided by dedicated Islamic organisations. It is well-known that the Bradford Council of Mosques (BCM) organised the infamous book-burnings in Bradford in January 1989, securing the attention of world media where the Bolton book-burnings of December 1988 had failed. But other organisations also played a role in the creation and propagation of Muslims' views. The UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) was formed on 11 October 1988, fifteen days after the publication of the novel. Founded by Director of the Islamic Foundation of Leicester Manazir Ahsan, and Editor of *Impact International* Muhammad Hashir Faruqi, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs sought to represent the interests of major Muslim organisations, mosques, and scholars (Vidino, 2010, p.119). However, the organisation could hardly be said to represent the diverse views held by Muslims, nor their differences in nationality, ethnicity, class and sect. With

its “middle-class leadership” (Modood, 1993, p.515; McLoughlin, 2005, p.59) of mostly Mawdudists (Vidino, 2010, p.119), its inherited vendetta against Rushdie (Vidino, 2010, p.119), and its Islamist lobby (Vidino, 2010, pp.119-120; McLoughlin, 2002, p.52; McLoughlin, 2005, p.59), the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs represented a highly particular Islam. In terms of representativeness, its promotion of political Islam is especially suspect, given that, “[f]ew Muslims – even practising ones – are Islamists in cultural and political terms. [...] In fact, Muslims are as varied, multifarious, and discordant a body as any other” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.71). The organisation’s lobbyist agenda, coupled with the Islamist make-up of its leaders, was at odds with the many Muslims whose religious practices were and remain a private affair.

Alongside existing Islamic organisations such as the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance, the Bradford Council of Mosques, and the Islamic Defence Council, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs nonetheless spoke on behalf of all British Muslims. “With *one voice*”, the committee “guide[d] the Muslim community in their efforts to express their anger and hurt” (Ahsan and Kidwai, 1993, pp.26-27; emphasis added). Based on Ahsan and Kidwai’s commentary, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs seems directly involved in two distinct acts of interpretive foreclosure. First, and insofar as the organisation represented all British Muslims with “one voice”, it transformed the singular perspectives of Muslims into a unified viewpoint. This viewpoint was, as a corollary, made to signify a shared Muslim identity (Vidino, 2010, p.121). In this way, the organisation effectively prevented individuals from practicing Islam differently and from holding different beliefs. Second, by “guid[ing]” Muslims toward mutual “anger and hurt”, the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs obfuscated individuals’ responses to the text. Though this approach enabled the committee to present a single, actionable appeal to government for the book’s banning

and the author's atonement, it simultaneously involved predetermining Muslims' relationship to the text as one defined by "anger and hurt". It is important to note here that "anger and hurt" are not the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs' words, but Ahsan and Kidwai's. The organisation's original missive (reproduced in *The Rushdie File*) proposes that "the publication of [*The Satanic Verses*] has angered and outraged Muslims enormously" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.60; emphasis added). Ahsan and Kidwai thus reproduce a notion of "the Muslim viewpoint" (1993, p.41) through a purported repetition of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs' aims that is actually a subtle displacement, or embellishment, of its original sense. 'Outrage' becomes 'hurt'. The co-founder of UKACIA, Muhammad Hashir Faruqi engages in a similar distortion of the committee's views; conveying the demands of "Muslim organisations in Britain" – which, one assumes, includes those of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs – he states:

[t]he Muslim community in Britain [...] is shocked and outraged beyond any describable measure by the unprecedented enormity of this sacrilege and by the fact that a so far respectable publisher, Penguin, has been insensitive enough to lend its name in this extreme profanity. (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.60)

"Anger and outrage" here becomes "shock and outrage". Ahsan and Kidwai and Faruqi thus aggregate a range of negative affects to describe 'the Muslim viewpoint' – almost but not quite synonymous with the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs' own representation of Muslims' views. In so doing, they furnish and entrench beliefs in the existence of a Muslim sensibility (and, implicitly, its distinctness from a non-Muslim sensibility). Moreover, they limit Muslims to a particular, negative engagement with the text. By naming Muslims' collective feeling toward *The Satanic Verses*, they implicitly sustain an orthodoxy of reading and its particular cultural, religious and geopolitical associations, and thereby prevent Muslims from being otherwise affected by the text. The

committee, its co-founder, and Ahsan and Kidwai manufacture a coherent, universal Muslim position, from which it becomes possible for them to publicly endorse protest as the only means through which Muslims can make known their anger, hurt or outrage, and, more importantly, can perform their identity as Muslims.

Particularly where *The Satanic Verses* is concerned, Islamic organisations like UKACIA thus authorise Muslim identities and views. And these operations of power are perpetuated by commentators on the activities of Islamic organisations, such as Ahsan and Kidwai. Though their often fundamentalist views are not at all identical with Islamic faith, “at the time of the Rushdie affair, the media gave massive and disproportionate coverage to Muslim extremists, regardless of the limited support they enjoyed among Muslims” (Modood, 2006, p.49). Our lack of access to dissenting Muslim voices at the time speaks to a far less diverse British parliament, and British media’s interest in divisive narratives about a cultural-religious war. It is also attributed to British Muslims’ disinterest in “contest[ing] the issue [of whether they as individuals agree with the publication of the book, and Islamic organisations’ lobbying on their behalf] with cantankerous activists backed by deep (well-endowed) coffers” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.71). The political and economic influence of organisations like the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs empowers some voices while silencing others.

However, ‘the affair’ is produced as a disagreement between Muslims and non-Muslims by a whole range of actors, and in differing ways. At times, opposing critics explicitly endorse an orthodoxy of reading by a reverse logic. Because they find the novel offensive as Muslims, they argue that Muslims should find the novel offensive. Some promote the public rejection of the novel as the only valid stance for Muslims to take. They condemn stances other than anger, hurt, outrage and shock as anti-Islamic. Shabbir Akhtar’s rhetoric is perhaps the clearest example of the vehemence with which the unified

(and exclusionary) Muslim perspective was formed. By proposing that “an *authentic* Muslim is bound to feel intolerably outraged by the book’s claims” (Akhtar, 1989, p.6; emphasis added), he implies that Muslims who feel other than outraged are inauthentic in their faith, and thereby encourages them to adopt more fundamentalist views.⁴⁴ Akhtar later puts it more strongly, asserting:

That *The Satanic Verses* is blasphemous should be, for the Muslim conscience, uncontroversial. [...] Any Muslim who fails to be offended by Rushdie’s book ceases, on account of that fact, to be a Muslim. *The Satanic Verses* has become a litmus-paper test for distinguishing faith from rejection. [...] The sacrilege of *The Satanic Verses* ought to be experienced as offensive even by believers for whom Islam is merely their idleness – or conscience – on Friday afternoons. (Akhtar, 1989 p.35)

In a way that may remind us of Ahsan and Kidwai’s elaboration of “the Muslim viewpoint”, Akhtar confidently evokes a “Muslim conscience”, reducing the complex, variegated and changing moralities of Muslims to a single, mobilisable horizon. This “Muslim conscience” must, moreover, find the text as blasphemous or risk being perceived to have rejected the sacramental status of the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic faith more broadly. Despite Akhtar’s admission on the same page that “it is for Muslims to interpret the imperatives of their own religion” (1989, p.35) – a claim that would seem to allow for interpretive heterogeneity – he denies Muslim respondents to *The Satanic Verses* this privilege and mandates their offence.

Phrases like “the Muslim viewpoint” and “the Muslim conscience” conspire to project shared views and values onto a definitively heterogenous religious community. But apparently banal notions of “the Muslim world” or “the Islamic world” also have overdetermining effects. They locate Muslims and Islam elsewhere. They establish Islam and non-Islam, and Muslims and non-Muslims as parallel realities. For example, Ahsan

⁴⁴ Mufti has shown that fundamentalist groups’ deployment of discourses around Islamic ‘authenticity’ mobilises non-Islamist Muslim communities to perform more conservative and more political forms of Islam (see 1991, p.105).

and Kidwai's claim that "no other book has caused so many deaths and injuries in the Muslim world as this outrageous publication" (Ahsan and Kidwai, 1993, p.25; emphasis added) fabricates a 'Muslim world' and a 'non-Muslim world'. This geopolitical reorganisation of Islam does not only undermine the practice of Islam around the world, but also prevents the reconciliation of Muslim and non-Muslim horizons. It makes the negotiation of cultural and religious differences spatially implausible.

In the preceding contributions to 'the affair', we can thus notice the extent to which some prominent readers link their interpretation of the novel as blasphemy to their identities as Muslims. We can also see the ways in which, supported by the representations of Islamic organisations like the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs and the Bradford Council of Mosques, offended readers invert this logic in order to propose that Muslims *should* interpret the novel as blasphemy, thus establishing an orthodoxy of reading by which religious faith can be measured. This orthodoxy of reading obscures the many different views that Muslims had on the novel. It forecloses a range of alternative responses among Muslims, advocating rather than describing how they read. More broadly, it misleadingly presents as causal a correlative relationship between Islamic faith and practices of reading.

Having observed the extent to which opposing critics link their responses to *The Satanic Verses* to their Islamic faith with the effect of limiting the affects of reading, let us now focus on the ways in which supporting critics continue to overdetermine the relationship between cultural and religious affiliations on the one hand, and practices of reading on the other. Both sides, we will find, participate in the reproduction of a cultural, religious and geopolitical opposition. Supporters of the novel appropriate opposing commentators' self-narrativisation of the influence of their Muslim identities, dramatising *The Satanic Verses'* divided reception as a cultural-religious war between Islam and

secular liberalism. Some supporters of the novel weaponised notions of ‘the Muslim/Islamic world’ in order to threaten the legitimacy of Islam in ‘the non-Islamic world’. For example, a 1989 editorial by *The Independent* argues that “Muslims are furnishing material for further moral parables about Islam by attacking Rushdie’s fictional creation, not only throughout the Islamic world – it has been banned in the author’s native India – but in Britain” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.68). We see here how positive commentators help to shore up links between in-the-world identities and practices of reading. The newspaper editor assumes a causal link between individuals’ practice of Islam and their criticism of the novel. They moreover encourage us to treat those who went on record as offended and who cited their Islamic faith as a motivating factor as representative of Islam at large, specifically Islam’s inability to meet purportedly moral standards of behaviour. In the process, they not only presuppose ‘the Islamic world’, but afford some validity to Muslims’ protests in ‘the Islamic world’ while resolutely denying the validity of their offence in Britain. Muslims are implicitly discoursed as foreign in Britain.

Other supporters of the novel cited Muslims’ opposing responses as evidence of the obsolescence of Islam more widely. In a polemic pamphlet titled *Sacred Cows*, for example, Fay Weldon holds the fundamentalism of the Qur’an as well as the zeal of Muslims responsible for the controversy. In opposition to Islam, she variously presents Christianity, atheism, and civilised society. Even as Weldon maintains the “absurd[ity] of all religions” (1989, p.6), she argues that, by contrast with the Bible, “the Koran [sic] is food for no-thought [...that] gives weapons and strength to the thought police” (1989, p.7). Weldon equates Islam with “this rigid set of rules for living, perceiving and thinking” (1989, p.5), echoing Rushdie’s own portrayal of Submission in *The Satanic*

Verses as “rules, rules, rules [...] rules about every damned thing” (363).⁴⁵ In a book-length study of Islam and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Malise Ruthven similarly considers Islam as restrictive and monopolising, particularly political Islam. He argues that even if “[i]t would be much too reductive to redefine Islamism as “Islamofascism”, [...] the resemblances are compelling” (Ruthven, 2002, p.207).⁴⁶ Given that he views Islamism as mostly inseparable from Islam (Ruthven, 2002, p.38), Ruthven effectively characterises Islam as a breeding ground for fascism. He contrasts Islamic fundamentalists with American fundamentalists who are “[w]ith few exceptions [...] law-abiding, political conservatives who use their voting power – in elections or in local community structures such as school boards – to express their religiously based concerns” (Ruthven, 2002, p.38). This oppositional logic and others like it are easily debunked if one thinks of the Ku Klux Klan’s proclaimed Protestantism and recent acts of terrorism committed by white supremacists in the name of Christianity such as the El Paso shooting. Nonetheless, supporters of *The Satanic Verses* regularly draw on such myths in order to undermine negative respondents’ views.

Within ‘the affair’, Muslims are not only discoursed as irrationally fundamental, but their actions – protests and book-burnings – are also primitivised. Fay Weldon explicitly characterises the book-burnings in Bradford as “[a] bit drastic” and “a bit primitive” (Weldon, 1989, p.9). Ruthven also describes Muslim protesters at a London

⁴⁵ In the passage of the novel in which this quote appears, we should note that Rushdie both fabricates new quasi-Islamic rules, and “invok[es] and confla[tes] a variety of religious and legal texts for convenience” such as the Qur’an and the Hadith (Rubinson, 2004, p.124).

⁴⁶ Ruthven explains his comparison of Islam and fascism as follows: “The ideological bases of the two movements [...] share common features. Fascism reacted both to the uncertainties of liberalism and to the chiliastic post-Enlightenment modernism of communism by seeking refuge in nostalgia and by refusing to acknowledge the contingent nature of the contemporary realities brought about by historical and social change” (2002, p.208). He applies to Islam the logic of fascism (of “abandoning the concept of class and class struggle” and “masquerad[ing] as the representative of all classes, conceived as a single national unit”) (Ruthven, 2002, p.208). And he finds that, similarly, in Islam, “it is tribalism rather than ‘class’ that is abandoned in order to facilitate, by concealing, the extension of tribal power under the guise of a national-religious purpose” (2002, p.208).

rally as “utterly *foreign*” (Ruthven, 1990, p.1; original emphasis). He continues: “They were not sophisticated, suave metropolitans like the blacks [...]; they seemed like men from the sticks, irredeemably provincial” (1990, p.1). Both Weldon and Ruthven assume that all of *The Satanic Verses*’ opposing critics are Muslim, and that their being Muslim is a determining factor of their offence. This approach, specifically its linking of reading and cultural-religious identity, mirrors that of prominent Muslim readers. But where Weldon and Ruthven differ is in their subsequent portrayal Islam and Muslims as repressive, primitive and backward.

Though at times they assume a universal sensibility, Weldon and Ruthven are clearly interested in establishing an opposition between a backward but nonetheless tyrannous Islam and a free-spirited, free-thinking West. John Gabriel agrees, arguing that,

[t]his notion of ‘freedom’, espoused by both liberal writers and politicians of the right and centre, is integrally bound up in a version of national identity: one that relies on constructing western secular values as somehow more advanced, more civilised and less oppressed than those of Islamic fundamentalism. (Gabriel, 1994, p.25).

‘Freedom’ becomes a watchword of religious intolerance. It is used by supporters of *The Satanic Verses* in a neo-orientalist tradition to not simply undermine opposing critics’ view on the book, but to delegitimise their ways of living (often, as derived from anti-Islamic stereotypes). This is clear in Ruthven’s and Weldon’s commentaries on ‘the affair’. Both highlight particular aspects of the protests and the religion of Islam as evidence that Muslims are incompatible with Western and British values. Islam is, for Ruthven, patriarchal and sexist. Temporarily forgetting the sexism of both the Church and secular society, he argues that the primacy of men, especially in an Islamic court of law, is “scandalous to a Western sensibility” (Ruthven, 1990, p.6). Weldon similarly posits that Muslims’ dutiful respect for Allah’s rules and omnibenevolence is paradoxical and “puzzling to Western ears” (Weldon, 1989, p.6). Overlooking both Christianity’s

shared heritage with the other Abrahamic religions of Islam and Judaism, and secular modernity's origins in Christianity, Weldon imagines a mostly secular, utopian West whose Christianity, when present, is plastic not dogmatic. In the service of ethnoreligious nationalism, she engages in a gross misrepresentation of Christianity, which is practiced in countries all around the world (including in 'the East'). As Talal Asad has persuasively argued, "[l]ike so many Britons who have leapt to Rushdie's side, Fay Weldon is aware that Christian rhetoric can be harnessed in the cause of a secular crusade" (Asad, 1990, p.244). The effect is to stage a culture war, and to question the belonging of Muslims and Islam in 'the West' – a notably imaginary cultural, religious and geopolitical entity.

Weldon and others stoke this division between Muslims and non-Muslims, discoursed as non-British and British respectively, despite the diversity of views on *The Satanic Verses* expressed by Muslims and despite many non-Muslims criticising Rushdie and his 1988 novel.⁴⁷ In fact, the incendiary way in which she describes events effectively promotes a culture war. She writes:

'Kill, kill, kill Rushdie' does not to me mean deep hurt and anger at Rushdie, it means a plague on you and all your works, on your rotten society: a society so appalling even the rules for living and believing laid down for hot-climate living by a sixth-century poet/warrior/businessman living in a primitive and largely illiterate society seem preferable to any you lot – that's us lot – have to offer. A plague on your folly, your arts, your alleged freedom of speech – *what about us?* (Weldon, 1989, p.14)

⁴⁷ For example, author, John le Carré famously criticised *The Satanic Verses* as well as Salman Rushdie and supporters' defence of the novel. Weighing in on the debate, he chided, "My purpose was not to justify the persecution of Rushdie [...] but to sound like a less arrogant, less colonialist and less self-righteous note than we were hearing from the safety of his admirers' camp" (Guardian Research Department, 2012, np). Fellow author, Roald Dahl also criticised Rushdie, calling him "a dangerous opportunist" who "must have been totally aware of the deep and violent feelings his book would stir up among devout Muslims" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.217). Dahl further stressed that "[i]n a civilised world we all have a moral obligation to apply a modicum of censorship to our own work," adding that censorship is part and parcel of the notion of free speech (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.218). Likewise, according to Ian Aitken writing for *The Guardian* in 1989, Labour MP for Tottenham, Bernie Grant was "one of the sponsors of an amendment to a deplorable Early Day Motion expressing 'regret' at the publication of the Rushdie book" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.76). Aitken adds that the motion was chaired by MP for Bradford, Max Madden, and also supported by MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, Brian Sedgemore. See also Taylor (1989). For an overview, see Donadio (2007).

Weldon deliberately conflates calls for Salman Rushdie to be executed (such as the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwā*) with Muslims' responses. This rhetorical move is important in that it facilitates her representation of Muslims as primitive given the reproach with which the *fatwā* in particular was met by world media. Yet "[d]evout Muslims were not unequivocal about either Rushdie or the Ayatollah's *fatwa* [...]. Nor was it the case that all those offended by Rushdie's text supported the fatwa and the book burnings" (Ranasinha, 2007b, p.48). Some Muslims were moved to denounce Islamism and support the right to free speech (for example, see Abdallah, 1994 and Afzal-Khan, 2002). As Tariq Modood insists, "we must distinguish [...] between radical Islamists and the wider Muslim opinion; for the former, despite the bewitchment of the media, are as representative of Muslims as the Socialist Workers Party is of working-class politics" (Modood, 2006, p.51). Not just Muslims, but Islamic organisations held diverse views: the Islamic Society for the Promotion of Religious Tolerance denounced Khomeini's statement and the violence it endorsed (see Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, pp. 100-101), while the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs "neither sanctioned nor approved of" the book-burnings in Bradford, led by the Bradford Council of Mosques (McLoughlin, 2005, p.59). Weldon thus purposefully homogenises Muslims as interested in "kill[ing] Rushdie". She then deliberately sustains this violent imagery in order to exacerbate fears that Muslims seek revenge not only on Rushdie and his works but on "[his] rotten society". In this way, Muslims are transformed into enemies of Britain. Remaining in character – or, better, caricature – as an offended Muslim, Weldon proceeds to direct ire at Britain's "folly", satirically criticising British society for being (more) civilised, democratic and free-spirited through references to the arts and freedom of speech.

Authors, publishers, politicians and well-known intellectuals regularly appealed to values of free speech in their defences of *The Satanic Verses*. Some participated in public counter-protests. Playwright Harold Pinter led a group of British writers to 10 Downing Street to petition Margaret Thatcher for an end to what he notably described as “an intolerable and barbaric state of affairs” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.106). On 22 February 1989, the National Writers Union held a demonstration outside the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, and protested bookshops that had removed *The Satanic Verses* from their shelves in fear after bombings at multiple stores (Kaufman, 1989). Simultaneously, little over twenty miles downtown in Manhattan, anti-censorship organisations, the Authors Guild, American PEN, and Article 19 together organised a public reading of the novel and a discussion featuring prominent authors and critics, including Edward Said (Craig, 1996, p.7). The situation descended into stereotype and prejudice; according to journalist Guy Talese, it was perceived by PEN as a case of “a respected Anglo-Indian with pals in London and New York’s literary circles versus the bearded brute in Iran” (Elie, 2014, np). Shortly after the Manhattan demonstration, a group of literary and cultural critics – including Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – penned a letter to *The New York Review of Books* which framed the debate in relation to free speech. They commented:

As writers and scholars from the Islamic world we are appalled by the vilification, bookbanning and threats of physical violence against Salman Rushdie, the gifted author of *Midnight’s Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses*. [...] Certainly, Muslims and others are entitled to protest against *The Satanic Verses* if they feel the novel offends their religion and cultural sensibilities. But to carry protest and debate over into the realm of bigoted violence is in fact antithetical to Islamic traditions of learning and tolerance. We deplore and regret this sort of thing, and we reaffirm our belief in universal principles of *rational discussion* and *freedom of expression*. (Abu-Lughod, Ahmad, Ali, Bilgrami, Said and Spivak, 1989, np; emphasis added).

The writers invoke Rushdie's right within literature to "express freely" and to expect from his readers "rational discussion." They implicitly convey that perceptions of *The Satanic Verses* as blasphemous are irrational and constraining. Though they attribute these views to "Muslims and others", their identification as "writers and scholars from the Islamic world" clearly implicates Muslims in the denial of free speech most strongly, even if they seek "as writers and scholars from the Islamic world" to show a diversity of opinion among Muslims. In fact, as in Weldon's account, we have here a rhetorical confusion of protesting Muslims and violent Muslims – specifically, the representation of protest as a gateway to violence. This allows Abu-Lughod, Ahmad, Ali, Bilgrami, Said and Spivak to covertly criticise mass demonstrations against *The Satanic Verses*. Thus, not only violence but protest and understandings of the novel as blasphemous more generally are made equivalent to denying the "*universal* principles of rational discussion and freedom of expression". By explicitly connecting their defence of the text to their belief in the 'universality' of freedom of expression, Abu-Lughod, Ahmad, Ali, Bilgrami, Said and Spivak perpetuate an understanding of Muslims as zealous in their conservatism, and as particular – not universal. Crucially, Muslims' protests are not considered valid expressions of free speech.

This is not the only example in which we can see *The Satanic Verses*' supporters mobilising free speech in a way that denies the legitimacy of Muslims' views and Muslims' belonging in Britain. In the poem 'The Satanic Verses', Tony Harrison's "use of a famous English nationalist anthem, William Blake's 'Jerusalem' to defend Rushdie and attack censorship" transforms free speech into an English nationalist phenomenon (Gabriel, 1994, p.24). Harrison tacitly suggests that Muslims' non-recognition of free speech as a legitimate defence of the novel represents their non-belonging to the nation. The British government similarly questioned Muslims' Britishness. On 4 July 1989, and

in an effort to resolve the controversy of *The Satanic Verses*, then-Minister of State for Home Affairs John Patten wrote to Muslim leaders to “defen[d] Rushdie’s book on the basis of democratic liberties of freedom of speech [...and] the rule of law”, and to implore integration (Hilbert, 2011, p.26). As Maria Hilbert astutely observes: “[h]is letter stress[ed] the need for British Muslims to participate fully in ‘our society’ and to ‘be part of the mainstream of British life’” (2011, p.26). Patten makes cultural and political integration compulsory for Muslims’ inclusion in British society, with the implication that he currently understands Muslims as outside British life. Equally, becoming part of the mainstream of British life appears to mean falling in line with secular and even blasphemic values and opinions. Failure to integrate – failure to self-censor – can mean, for Muslims, risking citizenship. A recent BBC Two documentary *The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On* similarly frames the debate by way of free speech. It is led by journalist and presenter Mubeen Azhar, likely selected by the broadcaster to present the programme precisely because he presents as an ‘integrated’ British Muslim with respect for the laws, institutions and state-organised values of British society. In the opening scenes, Azhar provides the following voiceover as a montage of book-burnings, British flag parades and flag-burnings play out on screen: “*The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie sparked a culture war between Muslims who believed they were defending the honour of their Prophet and the fundamental right to free speech” (*The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On*, 2019, 00:00:10-00:00:27). Azhar here sets up an opposition between Muslim critics of the novel and (Britain’s adoption of) Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, enshrined in law by the United Nations in 1948. Together with the historic film clips of Muslim protests and counter-protests, this opposition conspires to produce Muslims as not only anti-democratic and particular, but as a violent threat to Britain and the universal social body. It comes as no surprise, then, when Azhar reveals just over five

minutes into the documentary that he “believe[s] Salman Rushdie was completely entitled to write the book” (The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On, 2019, 00:05:29-00:05:34). In going to Bradford where the book-burnings took place, Azhar aims to find out “what happened to those people, [...] why they responded the way they did, [...] and] if they regret any of it” (The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On, 2019, 00:05:48-00:05:55). In citing regret explicitly, he immediately precludes any understanding of the legitimacy of Muslims’ motivations for publicly burning the novel.

These defences of *The Satanic Verses* posit free speech as not just universal but British, consequently conveying Muslims as provincial, even threats to the unanimity of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and non-British. There emerges a sense that while most people read in one way that is or should be universal, Muslims read in a disagreeable way that upsets the social order and which conflicts with human rights law. Yet it is not clear that freedom of expression is a universal right. Free speech defences of the novel clearly deprive Muslims of the right to freedom of expression, delegitimising their claims about the text. Ibrahim B. Hewitt notes precisely this paradoxical status of free speech whereby some communities are able to access, and rhetorically deploy such civil liberties more freely than others. In his critique of negative commentaries on the Bradford book-burnings, Hewitt proposes that “[i]f it is acceptable for one person to injure the feelings of millions by the use of his democratic rights of free speech and thought, then it must be equally acceptable for those injured to voice their feelings” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.69). He points out that defences of *The Satanic Verses* that cite the right to freedom of expression are valid only insofar as they can be countered by arguments which, too, are conditioned by the right to freedom of expression. Hewitt continues: “there is only a pretence of democracy for all these days; it is very much a case of one set of standards for ‘us’ and another for ‘them’” (Appignanesi and

Maitland, 1989, p.69). Within ‘the affair’, critics defending the novel withheld permission from those offended to speak out against it. Free speech here becomes an alibi for disrespect and animosity, for hate speech and Islamophobia.

However, it is not as simple as to suggest that supporters of Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* ‘misused’ or ‘abused’ free speech in order to perpetuate ugly stereotypes about Islam, to deny Muslims’ the ability to speak, and to ossify a so-called cultural-religious divide between Muslims and non-Muslims. Certainly, many mobilisations of free speech had these effects. But free speech immanently excludes Muslims. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has traced free speech’s origins in Enlightenment thought and European imperialism. Though she co-wrote with Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and others the letter that condemned opposing responses by reason of Rushdie’s right to freedom of expression, later that year, Spivak seemed to have changed her mind as to the appropriateness of free speech arguments in defence of the novel. In ‘Reading *The Satanic Verses*’ (1989), Spivak troubles notions of the universality of free speech as wielded by supporters of Salman Rushdie and the novel. She situates ‘freedom of expression’ as well as ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ as “normative and privative rational abstractions” derived from the European tradition of rationalism (Spivak, 1989, p.95). Via Michel De Certeau, Spivak traces the origin of secular rationality to Christianity: “the sublation/gradation of a monotheism into secularism” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Spivak, 1989, p.97). On this thesis, notions such as ‘freedom of expression’, ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights’ are produced by Enlightenment philosophy and ethics, which are themselves informed by assimilated Christian beliefs and values. We can register the profound influence of Christianity on secular conceptions of freedom of expression both historically and today. For example, in the seventeenth century, and in the interests of freedom of expression, English poet John Milton called for the relaxation

of what amounted to state censorship laws, notably except in cases of ‘Popery’ (Riordan, 2016, p.162). Himself a radical Protestant Puritan, Milton associated Papacy “with idolatry, with superstition, with corruption, and with Antichrist”, and sought to deny it tolerance (Shawcross, 1998, p.53). Thus, the forebears of ‘free speech’ were not only (Protestant) Christian, but informed by religious intolerance. Of particular relevance to *The Satanic Verses*, we could also think of the protections afforded to Christianity – and not other religions – under the common law offences of blasphemy and blasphemous libel until 2008.⁴⁸ To develop Spivak’s formulation of free speech as dialectical, liberal secular notions of free speech merely sublimate or negate Christian monotheism, and hence occasion a negation of the negation in which Christianity comes back into focus. With this genealogy of ‘freedom of expression’ in mind, Spivak warns against its uncritical invocation. She writes, “[t]he attempt to fashion an ethical universal out of a religious base, which is subsequently not called Christian but simply secular, then goes out of joint with the conjuncture, especially with a (national) subject not of the monopoly-capitalist dominant” (Spivak, 1989, p.97). Simply put, because notions of free speech and democracy derive from Enlightenment philosophy and ethics (a sublated form of Christianity), they cannot provide freedoms or rights to all persons. Hence, “[w]ithin the terms of liberal democracy, Rushdie and his supporters appeared reasonable and responsible, whilst their opponents were regarded as fanatical and backward” (Gabriel, 1994, p.29). Abstractions such as ‘liberal democracy’ and ‘freedom of expression’ ensure Muslims’ exclusion. In the case of ‘the affair’, Spivak comprehends free speech as an “alib[i]” for racism and Islamophobia: when ‘the affair’ is “coded as Freedom of Speech

⁴⁸ At the time, there were arguments made to extend the blasphemy law to cover Islam, notably by the Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie (see Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.124) and by cultural historian Richard Webster (1990).

versus Terrorism and even as ‘a triumph of the written word’, it is impossible to recognise it for what it is: “Racism versus Fundamentalism” (Spivak, 1989, p.95).

Muslims can and do possess secular values. In response to Rushdie’s 2001 criticism of Muslims as Islamists following the 9/11 attacks, Fawzia Afzal-Khan implores the author to listen to “the feminist voices allied with the ‘secularist-humanist principles’ Rushdie seems to think do not exist in the Islamic world” (2002, p.142). But free speech conspires to exclude Muslims in a second way. The universality of freedom of expression is not only contested by free speech’s origins in European imperialism and Enlightenment ideals, themselves products of a sublated Christianity. Free speech’s marketplace logic – not dissimilar to ‘free market’ capitalism – also ensures its exclusivity. To explain, contemporary endorsements of free speech across the political spectrum and in media and academia are underpinned by the marketplace of ideas thesis, principally associated with Enlightenment thinkers, Milton and John Stuart Mill, especially Mill’s writings in *On Liberty* (1859). The marketplace of ideas thesis contends that truth emerges through the free production and competition of ideas. It legitimises debate as a democratic means of enabling all individuals to participate equally in public forums with the expectation of societal progress and evolution, just as ‘free market’ capitalism operates under the guise of an economic liberal democracy that promises greater autonomy for businesses, product innovation, and more consumer choice. Yet, because free speech is conceptualised through the language of free market economics, it perpetuates rhetorical and material inequalities. Truth is the property of the highest bidder. Let us remember that the promises of ‘free market’ capitalism go unfulfilled; as David Harvey tells us in ‘The Right to the City’: “Market freedoms inevitably produce monopoly power (as in the media or among developers). Thirty years of neoliberalism teaches us that the freer the market the greater the inequalities and the greater the monopoly power” (Harvey, 2003, p.940). In other

words, the ‘free market’ privileges those who are more materially-endowed, whilst diminishing the freedoms of non-key players. In much the same way, free speech evokes a fantasy of a level playing-field whilst reproducing structural inequalities. “The marketplace of ideas, like many other markets, has monopolies, rackets and biases. Long-established supplies of opinions with entrenched positions in ‘the sector’ enjoy huge advantages” (Hirsch, 2018, np). In Britain, secular liberalism would always win out over Muslim sensibilities.

In summary, free speech is not at all universal. This is especially the case in the context of its usage during ‘the affair’. Apart from the extent to which some supporters of *The Satanic Verses* discursively produce free speech as English or British, their evocation of free speech itself bespeaks their secular (sublated Christian), liberal values. Moreover, even Muslims who support the ideals of free speech are unlikely to be rewarded with its privileges given the extent to which it functions like a ‘free market’, reproducing existing power relations such as the minority status of Muslims.

In conclusion to this section, offended readers (self-)represent as Muslims, giving license to supporting readers to furnish ideas about Muslims as backward, irrational, primitive and non-British, and to negatively define themselves as secular/Christian, progressive, democratic and British. Supporters’ citation of free speech in defence of the novel entrenched these identities, in part because Muslims are denied the ideals of free speech by dint of its genealogy and marketplace logic. Thus, “*The Satanic Verses* and its contradictory reception began to be seen as a metaphor for ‘the clash of civilisations’ with ‘dogmatic Islamic certainties’ pitted against the ‘free enquiry of Western liberalism’” (Ranasinha, 2007b, p.47). This narrative clearly obscures the diversity of opinion among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, linking too directly the relationship between religious faith and reading. Unable to account for unorthodox readings, it limits the readings that

are possible. This narrative remains a pervasive understanding of ‘the affair’, however. This is because it makes particular orthodoxies of reading a condition of subject-constitution (whereby the non-conforming risk abjection), and because it plays into ‘old’ and ‘new’ forms of xenophobia about Muslims as outsiders that must be expelled from or integrated within the nation.⁴⁹

2.2. An Affair of Reading

As a multi-authored narrative about a cultural-religious war between Muslim and secular sensibilities, ‘the affair’ thus constitutes a highly durable epitext that obscures the diverse ways that *The Satanic Verses* is read. As Fischer and Abedi have argued, “it generates differentiated audiences” and “gets people to further enact the conflicts it describes” (1990, p.108). Reading beyond the ‘affair’ is of course a relative impossibility given that “all these utterances (writings), and others about the context [of its reception], are intertexts that readers bring to bear on the novel” (Asad, 1993, p.276). It is worth acknowledging that readings respond to ‘the affair’ itself rather than or in addition to the book. It is not only the case that many readers amended their first readings of the text in light of the ‘affair’ (for examples, see Asad, 1990, pp.242-247), but also that many people developed a reading of the novel despite never having read it in its entirety. On this basis, Ruvani Ranasinha argues that “vocal non-readers [...] constitute a significant interpretive community” where *The Satanic Verses* is concerned (2007b, p.46). The book’s reputation preceded it. “By 1990, in the West at least, for everyone [sic] who had read one of [Salman Rushdie’s] books, a thousand had heard of him. In Asia, where his work was subjected to widespread bans and censorship, the discrepancy was still more extreme” (Fraser, 2008, p.184). Given the sensationalist coverage of the book, its author, ensuing protests and

⁴⁹ See Khair (2016) on ‘old’ and the ‘new’ xenophobia.

counter-protests, and the Ayatollah's fatwā, as well as the growing death toll associated with the book,⁵⁰ we can assume that there are significant differences between reading the novel and not reading but hearing about it.

Most often, it is negative respondents, constructed as Muslims, who are said not to have read the novel. Supporters of Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses* such as Kenan Malik, Dom Moraes and Adil Jussawalla, Damien Grant and Graham Swift use opposing non-readers as evidence that opposing respondents in general are unreliable witnesses of the text's content and that they should be ignored (see Malik, 2009b, p.15; Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.50; Grant, 1999, p.16; Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.219). It is worth saying that some offended readers didn't ever read the book, at least not in its entirety. For example, Kenan Malik is right that Indian MP Syed Shahabuddin didn't read the text. Shahabuddin himself admitted to not having read it, stating: "I do not have to wade through a filthy drain to know what filth is" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.47). During 'the affair', not reading was an act of identity construction (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2011, p.90). But claims that readers like Shahabuddin are typical of offended readers' relationship to the text are without evidence. It may be that Shahabuddin's non-reading is highly specific: some commentators, including Malik and Rushdie, have claimed that the Indian MP opportunistically criticised *The Satanic Verses* and lobbied for its banning in India in order to gain 'the Muslim vote' ahead of the 1989 elections, and in the midst of ongoing communal violence (see Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.44, pp.51-53 and p.73; Fischer and Abedi, 1990, p.117; Bloom, 2003, pp.86-89; Malik, 2009a). Nonetheless, the tendency to reserve the notion of non-reading for

⁵⁰ The book's Japanese translator, Hitoshi Igarashi, was killed. Its Italian translator, Ettore Capriolo was seriously injured, as was its Norwegian publisher, William Nygaard. Thirty-seven Turkish participants in the Pir Sultan Abdal Literary Festival were killed by firebomb, as the 2,000-strong mob demanded that they hand over the novel's Turkish translator, Aziz Nesin (Ramone, 2013, p.12). Several protesters in Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir were also killed.

opposing readers persists today. For example, in their introduction to an online special issue of *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* dedicated to the novel, Claire Chambers and Susan Watkins readily state: “Most of the protestors against *The Satanic Verses* hadn’t read the book, or had only read photocopies of decontextualized excerpts from its notorious ‘Jahilia’ section” (Chambers and Watkins, n.d., np). However, it has also been suggested that supporting respondents have not always read the book. John Gabriel argues that “initial western responses” were “not so much to the novel itself, but to the wave of protests that its publication had provoked amongst Muslim communities, both in Britain and internationally” (Gabriel, 1994, p.24). MP Syed Shahabuddin also claims that he isn’t the only one who has not read the book: “many of [Rushdie’s champions] have not, I believe, seen or read it” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.47). Thus, it may be the case that many of the readers I identify here are actually non-readers, in that they have not always read the whole book. Or, at least, interlocutors frequently project non-reading onto those with whom they disagree about the text’s merit.

We should take seriously the way in which non-readers participate in the perpetuation of ‘the affair’ by not reading the novel itself. However, “[n]ot reading might be best understood as part of a continuum of reading, rather than reading’s opposite” (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2011, p.95). Inversely, all readings are forms of not reading in the sense that reading is partial. According to some, *The Satanic Verses*’ most vociferous readers may be considered non-readers insofar as they fail to notice its linguistic, national and religious references (Asad, 1990, p.248), and/or its Bombayite style and ethos (Parekh, 1989, p.30). Although the readers here considered have varied relationships to the text at hand, and though they clearly use reading for the purposes of political lobbying (as we observed in Section One) I maintain that these characteristics are endemic to the practice of reading at large. Reading always involves acts of

prioritisation, not reading, and non-understanding (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed account of reading as non-understanding). Likewise, reading is always political.

(Non-)readers of *The Satanic Verses* may make it difficult to identify how they read and the affects of their readings. But, in this section, I strive to reconstruct interlocuters' assumed reading practices with reference to their reading self and self-in-the-world. Specifically, through a series of close readings of responses to *The Satanic Verses*, this section seeks to show that reading takes place much more diversely than portrayed by commentaries which tether cultural and religious positionality to orthodoxies of reading. Supporting and opposing readers are instead defined by the relationships to literature that they perform. Critics of the text highlight the ways that it evokes and undermines the Islamic historical record as well as Muslims' religious practices. Supporters of the text, meanwhile, draw attention to its status as a novel, celebrating it as fictitious, singular and literary. In reading terms, offended readers are not just Muslims or fundamentalists. Instead, their reading selves are moved to employ the knowledges and experiences of their selves-in-the-world which subsequently co-project with their reading selves the text's worldly coordinates. Supporting readers, by contrast, deny the role of their selves-in-the-world in their reading selves' engagement with the text's fictionality, even though the construction of fictionality depends on prior and particular knowledge and experience of the real and the fictional.

Whether some offended readers "carr[ied] protest and debate over into the realm of bigoted violence" (Abu-Lughod, Ahmad, Ali, Bilgrami, Said and Spivak, 1989, np) is less interesting than the fact that, unanimously, and in contrast to *The Satanic Verses'* supporters, they carried the text over into the realms of reality. Supporting readers are not simply secular liberals or xenophobic (British) nationalists. Rather, when they approach the text as the reading self, they co-produce its fictionality and creativity using a self-in-

the-world that is not always secular, but which often prioritises the evocation of knowledges to do with literary form and literary value. Yet, contributors on both sides of the ‘affair’ continually suppress the hybrid structure of their responses, as compiled by a reading self and a self-in-the-world, in order to present as incontrovertible truth an understanding of the text as counter-history or fiction. Offended readers cite the text’s religio-historical premise and ignore the way in which their experience of the text as real is mediated by the activities of the reading self and the particularities of its being affected by the text. Supporting readers overlook the extent to which the reading self’s experience of the text as fictional is premised on the self-in-the-world’s conception of the real and the imagined. They do so in part because *The Satanic Verses* and its reception made acts of reading acutely political: readings are highly performative processes through which readers are not always demonstrating how they read so much as lobbying for an exclusive idea of the text. This section now identifies and evaluates the material and textual claims made about the text’s meaning, while also highlighting such monological claims’ immanent hybridity.

Beginning with opposing critics, let us observe the extent to which these readers tend to short-circuit the feedback loop between the text, the reading self and the self-in-the-world in order to enact a solely materialist reading through which the text is perceived as (a distortion of) reality. In a commentary on the parallels between the narrated birth of ‘Submission’ in the novel and the genealogy of Islam, Syed Ali Ashraf complains that “[Rushdie] has intentionally and deliberately distorted the history of the Blessed Prophet and his Companions” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.25). Invoking his knowledge of the history of Islam, Ashraf condemns the novel to the status of bad history. He ignores the way in which the text affects him toward this interpretation. That is to say, he neglects the role of the reading self in the affective transmission of the text (in which reality is

suspended and exchanged for ‘reality’). Instead, the reading self’s experience of ‘Submission’ (as a different or singular ‘reality’, for example) is quickly transformed into the self-in-the-world’s experience of ‘Submission’ as a different – disingenuous – portrayal of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. In this way, Ashraf can portray *The Satanic Verses* as not a novel, but “an anti-Islamic theory in the guise of a novel” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.25-26).⁵¹ To Rushdie’s “thin veil of fiction”, Ashraf offers the challenge,

If some writer uses my name and the names of some of my friends and also selects some situations and incidents of my life and distorts them and vilifies them do I not have the right to charge that person for slander and defamation? (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.25)

It is unlikely that a defamation case could have been brought against Rushdie. The United Kingdom requires that claimants be personally affected and, in any case, the author could likely plead Fair Comment insofar as the novel never explicitly purports to deal in facts. British libel and defamation laws are ill-equipped to deal with moral religious injury more generally because it is difficult to quantify such damage financially, and current law relies on justice being served through reimbursement (Asad, 1990, p.247). Nonetheless, we can see clearly here the terms on which Ashraf experiences the text. For him, the text pertains to real referents – Islam, the Prophet Muhammad and His Companions – that anticipate a faithful reproduction of the religious narrative whose subsequent perversion is unconscionable.

Ashraf’s experience of the text as a blasphemous retelling of the textual history of Islam is severally substantiated by the text itself. First, the title of Rushdie’s book powerfully invites parallels with the real occasion of the satanic verses (now mostly

⁵¹ The Committee of Publications in South Africa shared a similar view in their rationale for banning the book, suggesting that *The Satanic Verses* is “thinly disguised as a piece of literature” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.64).

excluded from editions of the Qur'an) wherein Prophet Muhammad is said to have confused the devil's words for the Word of God. *The Satanic Verses*' allusion to the occasion of the satanic verses is not just controversial because it undermines the sanctity of the Prophet and the Hadith, but also because some Muslims and Islamic scholars do not believe that the incident of the satanic verses really took place (for an overview of their rationales, see La'Porte, 1999, p.126-128). Second, the secondary dream narrative's portrayal of Mahound invites knowledgeable readers to invoke the Prophet Muhammad, and to register His blasphemous treatment. The story of Mahound, told in the second and sixth chapters of the novel, 'Mahound' and 'Return to Jahilia,' has attracted the greatest criticism among readers. The name Mahound has itself inspired a materialist reading of the novel as not only a retelling of the birth of Islam, but one which indulges anti-Islamic, orientalist ideas about the religion. Given that "[t]he epithet 'Mahound' and its different variants in medieval times were used by Christian clerics to deride the Prophet who was accused of being an imposter" (Ahsan and Kidwai, 1993, p.30-31), it is unsurprising to find that some readers take Mahound unequivocally to signify the Prophet Muhammad and, in particular, the negative portrait of the Prophet employed by Christians to undermine the Islamic faith.⁵² The readerly production of Mahound as the Prophet Muhammad is furthermore supported by the text's characterisation of Mahound in these two chapters. Just as the medieval ages rendered the Prophet "the disseminator of a false revelation, [...] as well as the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy and a whole battery of assorted treacheries, all of which derived 'logically' from his doctrinal

⁵² Rushdie has defended his use of the epithet Mahound in 'In Good Faith,' collected in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991). The author claims that he uses the "medieval European demonization of 'Muhammad'" in the vein of "reclaiming language from one's opponents" (Rushdie, 1991, p.402). He draws attention to the passage in which the articulation of Mahound is paralleled with the reclaiming of identities undertaken by "whigs, tories [and] Blacks [who] all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn" (Rushdie, 1991, p. 402). Importantly, this admission does not dispute materialist readings of Mahound as Muhammad, but questions their offence.

impostures” (Said, 2003, p.62), so too does the text depict Mahound as a businessman and charlatan, prepared to adapt divine revelation and temporarily accommodate debauchery if it secures him more followers than Karim Abu Simbel, the Grandee of Jahilia. In other words, the text seems to encourage readers to mobilise their knowledge of the history of Islam, especially its orientalist treatment in the Middle Ages.

It is not only Rushdie’s appropriation of the name Mahound and his translation of Qur’anic characters and events into the text that allows readers like Syed Ali Ashraf to infer the Prophet Muhammad, and hence take issue with His treatment in the novel. We might also consider how the text introduces Mahound. In the chapter named for *The Satanic Verses*’ most controversial character, the unnamed narrator tells us that, “[p]ronounced correctly, [Mahound’s name] means he-for-whom-thanks-should-be-given [...] Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered [...but, rather] the devil’s synonym: Mahound” (93). The Prophet Muhammad’s name is derived from the Arabic ‘محمد’ meaning ‘the praised one’. ‘He-for-whom-thanks-should-be-given’ (as in the description of Mahound’s name) is suggestively synonymous with ‘the praised one’. Thus, following the narrator’s claim, Mahound is an improper articulation of Muhammad, specific to the “[h]ere” of the text world. But, “pronounced correctly,” Mahound’s name may be Muhammad.

Rushdie’s invocation of Mahomet as another possible name for his ‘imagined’ prophet further endorses materialists readings of the characters. It invokes French playwright, Voltaire’s play, first written and performed in French as *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète* (*Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet*) (1736).⁵³ The play, which

⁵³ Perchand provides an in-depth exploration of the relationship between not only Mahound and Mahomet, or Voltaire’s play and Rushdie’s novel, but also of the semblances between Voltaire and Rushdie – pursuing, what he terms, Rushdie’s recent self-styling as “the new Voltaire” (Perchand, 2016, p.465). For example, he notes that both Voltaire and Rushdie reify the difference between the “Secular West and Islamic East” and perpetuate the sense of “Western freedom and Eastern unfreedom” (Perchand, 2016, p.467); both authors make inseparable Islam and despotism through their dramatic re-narrativisation of pre-

was translated and adapted by James Miller for English performance as *Mahomet the Imposter* (1744), depicts a violent and deceiving Islamic prophet who legitimises his behaviour by invoking divine law. The derision with which Voltaire treats the pseudo-Prophet is made apparent in the opening act of the play. Phanor describes him as an “Imposteur à la Mecque (imposter in Mecca)” whose “miracles faux soutient l'illusion/ Répand le fanatisme et la sédition,/ Appelle son armée, et croit qu'un dieu terrible/ L'inspire, le conduit, et le rend invincible (false miracles sustain the illusion/ Spread fanaticism and sedition,/ and summon his army, which believes that a terrible god inspires him, and makes him invincible)” (Voltaire, 2015, p.15). James Miller preserves this contempt for the Prophet in his English adaptation. In a conversation with his friend Pharon, Alcanor, chief of the Senate in Mecca, describes Mahomet as an “arrogant imposter,” proceeding to equate his “profelytes” with “low untutor'd reptiles” (Miller, 1782, p.5). Pharon, meanwhile, describes Mahomet as a “tyrant”, and fears that members of the senate “[a]re mark'd with the contagion, who from views/ Of higher pow'r and rank/ Worlhip this rising fun, and give a sanction/ To his invasions” (Miller, 1782, p.5). We may thus recognise the extent to which Ashraf's co-production of Mahound as the Prophet Muhammad is supported by the text, particularly its sublation of Mahomet.

We might also read the Mahomet intertext as an allusion to the instance of the satanic verses and Rushdie's treatment of them. In the play, narrative effect and action flow from false claims of prophecy: Mahomet offers a particular reading of events which he ratifies with divine authority. He persuades Séide/Seid to take up this misinformed reading (of Zopire/Zopir especially) with the effect that the young son unwittingly kills his father. This topos finds its parallel in Rushdie's representation of the satanic verses in

Islamic Mecca and Jahilia (Perchand, 2016, p.471); and John Miller's adaptation of Voltaire's play was banned after three performances in London just as *The Satanic Verses* was banned in numerous countries (Perchand, 2016, p.470)

the ‘Mahound’ chapter. Mahound believes he hears the word of God (through the lips of the archangel, Gibreel) who recommends that the idols, Al-Lat, Uzza and Manat be worshipped alongside Allah as his daughters. Some readers may notice that this prophecy reproduces almost exactly the satanic verses of Islamic history.⁵⁴ In any case, during Mahound’s revelation, Gibreel intimates that Mahound is fabricating divine authority. The protagonist’s voice irrupts into the narrative: “[Mahound] is forcing something [...] *at my own jaw* working it, opening shutting; and the power, starting within Mahound, reach[es] up to *my vocal chords* and the voice comes” (112; original emphasis). Gibreel continues: “God isn’t in this picture. God knows whose postman I’ve been” (112). In frustration at Mahound’s message, and with Jahilians’ licentious conduct, one of the prophet’s disciples – his uncle, Hamza – kills the three brothers of Abu Simbel’s wife, Hind, as they brawl with Mahound’s disciplines, Khalid, Salman and Bilal. When, having been told by Hind that peace between the two forms of religion cannot and should not be reached, Mahound rescinds the satanic verses and implores monotheism, he is again said by Gibreel to have “d[one] his old trick, forcing my mouth open and making the voice, the Voice, pour out of me once again” (123). Thus, Rushdie’s reference to Mahomet serves to emphasise Mahound’s mutual reliance on false claims of prophecy, and possibly to implicate the Prophet Muhammad in such acts of falsification.

Thus, in many ways, *The Satanic Verses* courts its recognition as a revisionist history of the origins of Islam. In recognition of the extended parallelism between

⁵⁴ In the novel, the satanic verses appear as follows: “‘Have you thought upon Lat and Uzza, and Manat, the third, the other?’ [...] ‘They are exalted birds, and their intercession is desired indeed’” (114). Traces of the satanic verses have been erased in the Qur’an, and replaced with the actual revelation denying polytheism. However, we can locate them in Nabih Amin Faris’ translation of Hisham Ibn-Al-Kalbi’s كتاب الأصنام (*The Book of Idols*). Citing a passage from the fifty-third Qur’anic chapter, سورة النجم (‘The Star’), Faris translates “واللات والعزى وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةِ الْأُخْرَى” as “فإنهنَّ الغرائقُ الغلى وإن شفاعتهنَّ لَنُرجى” as “By Allat and al-‘Uzza/ And Manah, the third idol besides. /Verily they are the most exalted females /Whose intercession is to be sought” (Faris, 1952, p.17).

Mahound and the Prophet Muhammad, Shabbir Akhtar makes no distinction between Rushdie's fictional Mahound and the Islamic Prophet. He asserts that not Mahound, but

Muhammad, according to *The Satanic Verses*, was a debauched sensualist with 'God's permission to fuck as many women as he pleased'; his household is portrayed in pornographic scenes in a brothel incongruously called 'The Veil' – the symbol of female modesty and chastity in the Islamic ethical outlook. (Akhtar, 1989, p.5)

Akhtar's perception of Mahound as the Prophet Muhammad is partly corroborated by the novel, as we have seen. However, his understanding of Mahound's household as a brothel is somewhat less convincing. He conflates Mahound's home with The Curtain (*Hijab*), a brothel parodied in the image of his home.⁵⁵ The "pornographic scenes" therefore do not take place in Mahound's home but within The Curtain. In fact, it is only on Abu Simbel's advice that Mahound allows the brothels to remain open during the "period of transition" to monotheism (381). With this in mind, the provocatively sexual scenes are not at all between Baal the poet and "Mahound's wives in a brothel (pp.379-88)" as Akhtar wants to suggest (1989, p.25). Rather, "[t]he whores of The Curtain had each assumed the identity of one of Mahound's wives" (381). The interactions against which Akhtar complains are between Baal and the women working at the brothel in character as Mahound's wives. The poet Baal attracts the attention of The Curtain's prostitutes as he pretends to be a eunuch there in an attempt to evade retribution for falsifying the prophet Mahound's words.

This is Rushdie's defence of the scenes depicting The Curtain in 'In Good Faith'. Responding to conflation of Mahound's wives with the prostitutes at the brothel, the author writes: "what happens in Gibreel's dreams is that the whores of a brothel *take the names* of the wives of the Prophet Mahound in order to arouse their customers. The 'real'

⁵⁵ One of *The Satanic Verses*' most vocal opponents, and the man largely responsible for the book's banning in India, MP Syed Shahabuddin, also makes this mistake of confusing the brothel with Mahound's home, and his wives with the prostitutes named after them (see Malik, 2009b, p.14).

wives are clearly stated to be ‘living chastely’ in their harem” (Rushdie, 1991, p.401; original emphasis). The author draws attention to the mimicry of the prostitutes (and therefore their lack of correspondence with Mahound’s wives). He denies the validity of readings which transact meaning between Mahound’s wives and their prostituted namesakes. Furthermore, by highlighting that all of this narrative action takes place within the dreams of a fictional character, and by placing the reality of Mahound’s wives in inverted commas, he seeks to establish the Submission narrative as imagined, relative to the fictional reality of Gibreel and Saladin in Proper London, and to thereby invalidate materialist readings of text.

Even though the text shrouds Mahound’s wives in layers of fiction, we cannot straightforwardly agree with Rushdie that the prostitutes are not the imagined prophet’s wives (nor related to the Prophet Muhammad’s wives). To do so, we would have to disregard the way in which the text continually frames semblances between the prostitutes, Mahound’s wives and the Prophet Muhammad’s wives so as to invite a parallel reading of all three referents. Rushdie himself momentarily advocates this doubled reading, drawing attention to the significance shared between Mahound’s home and the brothel. In ‘In Good Faith’, he acknowledges:

Both are places where women are sequestered, in the harem to keep them from all men except their husband and close family members, in the brothel for the use of strange males. Harem and brothel are antithetical worlds [...but] echoes of one another. (Rushdie, 1991, p.401)

The author here indicates that he intends his juxtaposition of the image of the harem and the brothel, and their ensuing semblances, to encourage readers to recognise one within the other. In this sense, he endorses a simultaneous reading of Mahound’s home and the brothel.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ This parallelism is also kept in play by the novel’s description of the men queuing to enter The Curtain: “on many days a line of men curled around the innermost courtyard of the brothel, rotating about its

We can also detect framed similarities between the prostitutes and Mahound's wives that insist on their relationship. For example, the prostitutes not only share the wives' names but, also, it is said that they begin to develop similar personalities as them (see 382). In addition, the narrator tells us that "[t]he fifteen year old whore 'Ayesha' was most popular with the paying public, just as her namesake was with Mahound" (381). Here, the text explicitly encourages us to make connections between 'Ayesha' and Mahound's youngest wife Ayesha on whom the disguised prostitute is modelled. Though both 'Ayesha' and Ayesha are characters with the larger structure of Gibreel's dream (and though Gibreel is of course a character in *The Satanic Verses*), these layers of fiction do not prevent readers from connecting them both to each other and to the Prophet Muhammad's youngest wife عائشة بنت أبي بكر (Aisha bint Abi Bakr). Not only is Ayesha a homophone of عائشة (Aisha), but just as 'Ayesha' is the youngest performer at fifteen and the most popular, so too was Aisha the Prophet Muhammad's youngest wife, betrothed as a child, and his purported favourite. Additionally, Rushdie's characterisation of 'Ayesha' the prostitute "is present in Shi'ite uses of the name Ayesha to rhyme with 'fahisha' ('whore'), grounded in a frequently used moral parable about chaste behavior of women that Ayesha transgressed" (Fischer and Abedi, 1990, p.124). The prostitute's performance as 'Ayesha' therefore encourages readers with a knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith to invoke, and read as her counterpart, Aisha bint Abi Bakr.⁵⁷ Thus, the scenes depicting *The Curtain* allow readers to make connections between the brothel and

centrally positioned Fountain of Love much as pilgrims rotated for other reasons around the ancient Black Stone" (381).

⁵⁷ All the wives/prostitutes in the novel share similar names to Prophet Muhammad's real wives. In addition to Ayesha/A'isha bint Abi Bakr, there is also: Sawdah/Sawda bint Zam'a; Hafsa/Hafsa bint Umar; Zainab bint Jahsh/Zaynab bint Jahsh; Zainab bint Khuzaimah/Zaynab bint Khuzayma; Umm Salamah the Makhsumite/Hind bint Abi Umayya (Umm Salama); Rehana the Jew/Rayhana bint Zayd; Juwairiyah/Juwayriyya bint al-Harith; Safia/Safiyya bint Huyayy Ibn Akhtab; Ramlah/Ramla bint Abi Sufyan; Mary the Copt/Maria al-Qibtiyya; and Maimunah/Maymuna bint al-Harith (see 382). In addition to having similar names to Muhammad's actual wives, the wives/prostitutes in the novel also share characteristics with them. For example, Maria al-Qibtiyya was an Egyptian Coptic Christian which is made explicit in the naming of Mary the Copt in the text.

Mahound's house, and between the brothel and the Prophet Muhammad's harem, thus also giving them license to create new links between Mahound's harem and the Prophet Muhammad's harem.

The Satanic Verses' most controversial episodes can therefore be seen to include key persons and events from Islamic history which support materialisations of its narrative. Readers with relevant knowledges of Islamic history are likely to recognise that "[Rushdie] fantasises and redefines real, recognisable men and women [such as the Prophet Muhammad and his wife, Aisha] and does not create wholly new characters and images" (Parekh, 2017, p.296). As such, they may conclude, like Parekh, that the text offers "an imaginatively reinterpreted but not radically reconstituted reality" (Parekh, 2017, p.296). On encountering characters like Mahound, places like Jahilia and stories like the occasion of the satanic verses, their reading selves recruit their selves-in-the-world, which relay their knowledge of relevant historical and religious horizons and associated worldly referents. Reading selves project these back into the text, constructing textual referents as material. During the time-flow of reading, and as reading selves trace the ways in which the text places the materiality of these referents under duress, selves-in-the-world may subsequently assimilate these made-material references as reinterpretations of their real counterparts. I purposefully detail the role of the reading self in materialist readings here in order to highlight reading's immanent hybridity. Indeed, in one sense, Shabbir Akhtar can be seen to undertake a highly textualist reading of the Mahound episodes, insofar as he imaginatively plots connections between the Prophet Muhammad's house, Mahound's harem and the brothel.

The recursive processes through which readers recognise textual references as material may engender upset or anger. 'The affair', for example, insists that this way of reading concludes in offence among Muslim readers. Likewise, experts on 'the affair'

have since legitimised offended responses in recognition of the text's distortion of holy referents. Victoria La'Porte sympathises that "because of its close associations to real historical events [the novel] cannot lay claim to be pure fiction and thus have all the safeguards pure fiction is entitled to" (1999, p.119). She implicitly endorses (Muslim) protests here, portraying them as the natural consequence of the text's appropriation of Islamic history. Anshuman Mondal makes a similar argument, stating:

Rushdie does not always violate the conventional historical record relating to the first years of Islam. Indeed, it may well be the relative proximity of his account of the formation of Islam to the orthodox sacred history that precipitated such emotional turbulence in contemporary Muslim (non)readers. (2013, p.425).

Mondal here elides the reading process itself. But he seems to imply that *The Satanic Verses*' retelling of the birth of Islam is to a greater extent familiar to "Muslim (non)readers". For Mondal, these readers project the real textual history into the text, and are understandably disappointed or angered when the text thwarts their expectations and contests the sacred history of Islam and the exemplary status of the Prophet.

Yet it is not only Muslims who read the text by way of Islam. Likewise, reading the text materially by way of the originary narratives of Islam or other worldly referents does not guarantee the production and experience of negative affects. This is made clear by the activities of Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF), an organisation founded in response to the fatwā and as a result of a public meeting organised by Southall Black Sisters and the Southall Labour Party Women's Section. Members and allies of WAF often mobilised their knowledges and experiences of Islam (and Islamism) in order to process *The Satanic Verses*, but welcomed the text's subversion and criticism of sexist traditions within the religion (see [Multiple Authors], 1990, pp.3-4; p.12). Poet, Tony Harrison's *The Blasphemers' Banquet* (1989) similarly responds both to the Islamic undertones of the text and what he perceives as the (Islamic) fundamentalism of 'the

affair'. In other words, it is possible to prioritise a materialist reading of *The Satanic Verses*, and even to invoke epistemic and experiential resources around Islam, while being neither Muslim nor offended.

I have identified the materialist logics of offended readers' responses, in the process evaluating their validity and their (albeit disavowed) experience of textual affects. Let us now register supporting readers' textualist claims regarding the text's fictionality and literariness, again verifying their accounts of the text while showing their abiding reliance on materialist interpretive operations. We will see that, when they are not heralding the imperatives of free speech, supporters of *The Satanic Verses* tend to assert that the text is imaginative fiction, a claim with some purchase on the novel. They also tend to obscure the role of the self-in-the-world – and specific, worldly conceptions about the literary and its relationship to the world – in these kinds of textualist readings.

Let us begin by surveying the terms with which some supporters described the novel. Writing for the *Indian Post* in 1988, three days prior to the novel's banning in India, Nisha Puri commended Rushdie for "his most ambitious fictional endeavour", describing *The Satanic Verses* as "a work of truly daring creativity" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.13). By contrast with opponents to the novel who overwhelmingly experience it as punctuated by real characters and events, Puri posits the text as imaginative fiction that "commands an immediate suspension of disbelief" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.14). In Chapter 1, I proposed that the reading self *participates in the suspension of the self and the world in the service of the text's other universe*. Puri's remarks are therefore implicitly associated with the activities of the reading self. He denies the role of the self-in-the-world in processes such as the suspension of disbelief even though such operations clearly depend negatively on selves-in-the-world's specific notions of reality.

At the prize-giving ceremony for the Whitbread Prize in 1988, Fay Weldon similarly lauded *The Satanic Verses*' creativity. She described the text as a work of literary fiction, so ““magnificent”” that it ““defies any but the most timid of souls *not* to give it a prize”” (Weldon, 1989, p.37; original emphasis). In her semi-fictionalised retelling of the judging process, she continues: “Give Rushdie the Whitbread Novel-Category Prize? We can hardly not. It’s a *literary* prize” (Weldon, 1989, p.39; original emphasis). By foregrounding the literary nature of the Whitbread Prize and *The Satanic Verses*' suitability in these terms, Weldon accentuates the text’s literariness and its existence outside reality. She places emphasis on the role of the reading self. Moreover, by characterising those of a different opinion than herself as “timid” and even implausible, she effectively universalises her reading of the text – which is to say that she obscures the role of the self-in-the-world in her experience of it as literary.⁵⁸

The proximity of Weldon’s reading-self-directed response to the text on the one hand, and her in-the-world advocacy of *The Satanic Verses* for the Whitbread Prize on the other provides us with unique insight into the self-in-the-world’s participation in the perception and consecration of literary fiction. We can account for Weldon’s self-in-the-world and its attachment to the text in different ways. Her enjoyment of *The Satanic Verses* as a literary text may be attributed to her identity as a literary professional, for example, given the text’s “timid obeisance to the latest literary and political fashions” (Parekh, 1989, p.31). Certainly, “[Rushdie] enjoyed the uncritical support of a literary establishment obsessed with ‘terrifying singularity’” (Parekh, 1989, p.33). The text fulfils highly particular notions of the literary. In as much as it formally and thematically

⁵⁸ Weldon assumes that the relationship between apparently meritorious works of literature and the awarding of literary prizes – between cultural value and cultural prizes – is straightforward. But it is not the case that the ‘best’ books win the most prestigious prizes. English (2005) has shown that prizing is a cultural practice, through which social actors (including authors, judges and readers as well as critics of prize culture), cultural products, and prizes are mutually constituted and gain cultural capital.

contemplates literature as a form of secular faith, and was discursively produced as sacred both by Rushdie and by those who condemned the Bradford book-burnings, *The Satanic Verses* belongs to “modern bourgeois culture” (Asad, 1990, p.250; see also p.258).⁵⁹ Rushdie’s deployment of postmodern literary techniques is similarly amenable to modern bourgeois culture, which subsequently constructs him as *the* ‘Third World’ author (see Ahmad, 1992, pp.126-127).

The Satanic Verses not only depends on a particular notion of literature, but on specific notions of postcolonial literature. Timothy Brennan has astutely observed that Rushdie is marketed and achieves international celebrity by way of

a harsh questioning of radical decolonisation theory; a dismissive or parodic attitude towards the project of national culture; a manipulation of imperial imagery and local legend as a means of politicising ‘current events’; and a declaration of cultural ‘hybridity’ – a hybridity claimed to offer certain advantages in negotiating the collisions of language, race and art in a world of disparate peoples comprising a single, if not exactly unified, world. (1989, p.35)

Rushdie offers postcolonial lite, engaging in “writing that thematises colonialism, but that does not do so from a strident point of view” (Brennan, 1989, p.37). Yet it is not necessarily that Rushdie is easily assimilable within ‘Third World’ literature or postcolonial studies, but that “his writing played an extraordinary and unparalleled constitutive role in the very formation of postcolonial theory, whose vocabularies of hybridity and migration register the taint of his presence” (Procter, 2006, p.44).⁶⁰ Rushdie’s writing is adapted and taken up as postcolonial theory; this is perceptible not

⁵⁹ Asad unhelpfully establishes an opposition between ‘modern bourgeois culture’ and Islamic religiosity that belies the extent to which Muslims, for example, can draw on both repertoires of world-making. Asad’s own analysis of a young Muslim Zaheera’s response to the text shows this (see 1990, pp.244-245). He also has a tendency to contrast Muslim readers with Western readers in a way that denies British Muslims’ experiences and overdetermines the relationship between geopolitical location and/or faith and reading practice.

⁶⁰ Procter complicates arguments such as Ahmad’s above that too quickly name Rushdie a member of the liberal elite. In a judicious account of the author’s interest in negotiating different class identities both in his writing and political activism, Procter shows the influence of black British cultural production on Rushdie (see 2006, pp.37-42).

only in the prevalence of terms like ‘hybridity’, but in the titling of one of the discipline’s foundational texts, *The Empire Writes Back*, which is named after Rushdie’s essay, ‘The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance’ (1982). Weldon’s enjoyment of the novel as literary fiction is therefore not universal at all, but highly particular to the privileged literary-cultural milieu of the time and a newly prevailing sense of postcolonial/‘Third World’ literary value.⁶¹ Thus, there are significant materialist operations underpinning her textualist reading of the novel.

If we trust that Weldon provides an accurate recollection of the Whitbread Prize ceremony, her contribution, together with that of Nisha Puri, shows that critical delineations of the novel’s discursive status occurred prior to ‘the affair’ and the fatwā. However, the task of securing a distinct discursive terrain for the text became all the more urgent following highly public criticisms of *The Satanic Verses*’ treatment of Islamic culture and history, and the Ayatollah’s intervention. To this end, respondents tended to focus on the novel’s form. For example, author Graham Swift chose to articulate “work[s] of literature” as “*more* than free expression” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.219; original emphasis). In a March 1989 letter to the *Independent*, he insisted that:

[Literature] is creative expression, which does not argue, state or assert, so much as make. A novel exists, *lives* in the minds of its readers, as no statement or assertion can [...] [T]he defence of the book as literature should not be regarded as some feeble, minor plea. (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.219; original emphasis)

Swift’s point seems to be that literature is not an rhetorical form. Because *The Satanic Verses* does not explicitly “argue, state or assert” that Islam is a constraining religion that has no place in British society or that the Prophet Muhammad was a charlatan, offended

⁶¹ More pragmatically, Weldon and Rushdie were long-time friends after working at an advertising agency together (see Weldon, 1989, p.42). Thus, it was highly likely that Weldon would come out in support of *The Satanic Verses* and its author.

readers must hold themselves to account for producing the text in this way.⁶² In the meantime, he naturalises his own reading and enjoyment of the novel as a “creative”, “liv[ing]” thing. While theories of reading, including my own, tell us to take seriously readers’ agency in bringing texts to life, to use Swift’s vocabulary, he here implicitly denies literatures’ relationship to the world. This is the case even though the author’s perception of literature as apolitical is highly political and worldly, rooted in a humanist notion of literature and reading and in the English literary tradition of the twentieth century (see Bernard and Swift, 1997).

If there is a latent valuing of (‘high’) literature over mere political rhetoric in Graham Swift’s account, this is made explicit in BBC 2 Controller Alan Yentob’s contribution to ‘the affair’. During his reflection at a 1989 conference on the cultural and political questions raised by ‘the affair’, Yentob deemed it important to reiterate what he perceived as the text’s original aims in light of recent media coverage. He stated:

The spark which ignited this fire [of the controversy] is a serious and ambitious work of imaginative fiction. I think it’s very important to say this, because looking at some of the correspondence in the pages of our newspapers, one would imagine that this book was simply written as a provocative act and that it has no serious purpose. (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.196)

Like Nisha Puri and Graham Swift, Yentob carefully defines *The Satanic Verses* as fiction. He implies that the print media has misrepresented the text by supporting sensationalist versions of events. Yentob wants to recover the novel’s “serious” purpose which, within his equation of *The Satanic Verses*’ with “a serious and ambitious work of imaginative fiction”, marks the recovery of the text’s fictionality. In much the same way

⁶² Though supporting commentaries in the immediate aftermath of *The Satanic Verses*’ publication and the ensuing controversy tend most toward a reification of fact and fiction or history and literature, more recent critical essays also sometimes indulge in such binaries. Rossitsa Artemis’ notion that offended readers’ reception of the text betrays “the dangers of reading fiction literally” (Artemis, 2010, p.191), for example, tallies almost exactly with Graham Swift’s sense that the text’s ‘living’ representations have been politicised.

as Swift and Weldon, Alan Yentob here presents as unambiguous an experience of the text as fiction; although, differently, he refers to authorial intent – Rushdie’s “serious purpose”. The perlocutionary force of his comments here may be best summarised by Paul Elie’s 2014 retrospective for *Vanity Fair*. There, Elie asks of the fatwā and the involvement of British mullahs: “what did a klatch of muttering religious patriarchs have to do with literature, anyway?” (Elie, 2014, np). Both Elie and Yentob convey literature and religion as occupying different domains, ridiculing either critical readers or world media for suggesting otherwise.

Rushdie defends the novel in much the same way. He suggests that Muslims and other critical respondents have misrepresented the text entirely: interpretations of the novel as “bad history, as an anti-religious pamphlet, as the product of an international capitalist-Jewish conspiracy, as an act of murder (‘he has murdered our hearts’), [and/or] as the product of a person comparable to Hitler and Attila the Hun” are irreconcilable with “the [book] I actually wrote” (Rushdie, 1991, p.393, p.397). In a characteristically satirical mode (notably, the only actors in ‘the affair’ likened to Hitler were the book-burners), Rushdie ridicules material experiences of the text as sacrilegious, anti-Islamic dogma, suggesting that critics have fabricated an altogether different book. The novel’s publisher Penguin reportedly construed criticisms of the novel in precisely the same terms, telling negative respondents that “they ‘don’t recognise Salman Rushdie’s novel in your description’” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.61). In a manner that recalls Weldon’s position on the text and its worldly coordinates in bourgeois literary culture, Penguin even cited the critical reception of the text in order to vindicate it, stating that “it has ‘been widely praised by critics’ and that ‘we have no intention of withdrawing the book’” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.61).

Whereas Penguin stops short of diagnosing the problem with opposing readers, Rushdie offers two key hypotheses. First, he posits that offended readers presume his malicious intent with the book and ‘misappropriate’ it to that end, often without having actually read the text in its entirety. He places great significance with authorial intention, going as far as to suggest that critics’ use of his name to signify an enemy of Islam represents the construction of “a *false self*” (Rushdie, 1991, p.405; original emphasis), thereby indicating his belief in ‘a real self,’ and a somehow more accurate way to read the novel. He appeals to “the great mass of ordinary, decent, fair-minded Muslims” to appreciate that he wrote the novel in good faith (Rushdie, 1991, p.395).⁶³ Accusations of the novel’s offensiveness and profanity, writes Rushdie, prevent offended readers from engaging with “the book’s *real* themes” (1991, p.395). His attempts at sympathy and reconciliation quickly revert back to a reassertion of his authorial intent, made synonymous with ‘reality’.

Second, Rushdie suggests that offended readers do not understand the essential character of reading and writing literature. He argues that “to treat fiction as if it were fact, is to make a serious mistake of categories” (Rushdie, 1991, p.409). Yet to solely treat literature as fiction is an impossibility given that reading takes place between a reading self and a self-in-the-world which together co-negotiate the derivation of the real and the fictional. The reading self and the self-in-the-world are co-affecting; during reading, they re-establish notions of the real and the fictional together. By reifying fact and fiction, Rushdie thus denies the intrinsic hybridity of reading, and the role of the self-in-the-world in the negative definition of fiction. Fact and fiction are not only relative, but culturally- and religiously-specific. For example, we might dispute the extent to which

⁶³ As Mondal has pointed out, it is difficult in practice to identify what would constitute ‘good’ or ‘fair-minded’ Muslims for Rushdie given that he criticises everything from Islamism to orthodoxy and organised religion in general (see 2013, p.432).

interlocutors like avowed atheists Salman Rushdie and Fay Weldon appreciate the reality of the Prophet Muhammad (let alone His sacredness), or the significance of *The Satanic Verses*' imaginative reconstruction of His life.⁶⁴ Clearly, Rushdie is advocating particular ideas of fact and fiction, which are informed by his secular worldly horizon. Despite Rushdie's criticism of (religious) orthodoxy both in *The Satanic Verses* and in subsequent critical essays, and "[d]espite asserting that his novel dissents against 'imposed orthodoxies of all types' [in 'In Good Faith' p. 396]", he yet upholds an orthodoxy about the text's meaning (Mondal, 2013, p.432).⁶⁵ Sameer Rahim, writing for the *Independent*, concurs. He alludes to the orthodox manner in which Rushdie has defended *The Satanic Verses*, suggesting that the author has "affirmed the narrative of the rebellious artist versus the narrow-minded Godly [...] *religiously*" (Rahim, 2012, np; emphasis added). By describing Rushdie's manner of defence as 'religious,' Rahim implies how Rushdie's very resistance to orthodoxies is a form of orthodoxy. Rahim conveys literary liberalism as a secular religion.

Having observed a general trend among supporters of the text to cite its existence as literary fiction, and to conceal the role of their selves-in-the-world in arriving at such a conclusion, I now turn to Rushdie's detailed remarks about the meaning of the text in order to assess the validity of supporting critics' claims. We have already seen the author accentuate the text's literary status and its self-contained reality both directly above and in his reactive commentary on the relationship between the prostitutes, Mahound's wives, and the Prophet Muhammad's wives. But recognising that his imagined prophet has attracted heavy criticism for its unflattering likeness to the real Islamic Prophet, Rushdie

⁶⁴ Weldon revealed that she had become a Christian in 2006 (Jeffries, 2006). Rushdie suggested that he had converted to Islam in 'Why I have embraced Islam' (1991), but later removed the essay from subsequent editions of *Imaginary Homelands* and replaced it with 'One Thousand Days in a Balloon', an essay deploring the conservatism of what he calls "Actually Existing Islam".

⁶⁵ For Mondal, Rushdie upholds a secular orthodoxy or fundamentalism in his intolerance for religious practice (see Mondal, 2013, p.432).

has also drawn attention to the layers of fiction surrounding the Mahound episodes. He emphasises that Mahound is not just a fictional character who lives in a fictional city, inside a fictional text but, further, that he is a fictional character who lives inside the mind of the novel's fictional protagonist, Gibreel Farishta. For Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*' prophet is so deeply imbedded within fiction that he ceases to have real world connections. Writing of himself in *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*, the author argues:

his Prophet was not called Muhammad, lived in a city not called Mecca, and created a religion not (or not quite) called Islam. And he appeared only in the dream sequences of a man being driven insane by his loss of faith. These many distancing devices were, in their creator's opinion, indicators of the fictive nature of his project.⁶⁶ (2013, p.75)

Rushdie is right that Mahound does not share Muhammad's name, that Jahilia is explicitly not Mecca and that Submission is not Islam. He is also correct that Mahound is only present in 'Mahound' and 'Return to Jahilia'. Both chapters are conveyed as dreams: the first opens with an extended passage narrating Gibreel's sleeping and dreaming state (see 91-92); the latter is interrupted by the phrase "And Gibreel dreamed this:" shortly after it begins (see 363) and continues to feature similar deictic expressions which emphasise the narrative's taking place within Gibreel's dream (see 370, 372, 376, 390, 393, 394). These factors may support a more textualist reading of *The Satanic Verses* and its treatment of faith. Hence, Rushdie cites them as evidence of his ambitions with the text.

Authorial intention matters little where reading is concerned. The literary work is not the text, after all. In any case, it is not actually clear that Rushdie's intention with the dream sequences is to distance events from reality. Put another way, considering the ways that characters contemplate the reality of dreams throughout the narrative, Mahound's existence within a dream does not guarantee his fictionality, but rather ensures precisely

⁶⁶ A variation of the same argument appears in 'My Book Speaks for Itself', in 'An open letter to PM' addressed to Rajiv Gandhi, collected in *The Rushdie File*, and in Rushdie's essay 'In Good Faith' (see Rushdie, 1989, p.39; Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.44; and Rushdie, 1991, pp.397-403).

that his relationship to reality is ambiguous. The text's consideration of dreams has a cumulative effect on the reading process. It is the frequency with which the text calls attention to the reality or reality-effect of dreams that has the potential to move us toward a reconsideration of the relationship between dream and reality. Notwithstanding, let us focus in detail on one particular treatment of dreams in the text. In the final few pages of the retrospective narration of Gibreel and Saladin's being held hostage aboard AI-420, Gibreel confesses to Saladin that he fears sleep because he has vivid dreams in which he is the archangel Gibreel. The passage appears as follows:

and I don't mean interpreting a role, Spoono, I am him, he is me, I am the bloody archangel, Gibreel himself, large as bloody life. [...] Gibreel was sweating from fear: 'Point is, Spoono,' he pleaded, 'every time I go to sleep the dream starts up from where it stopped. Same dream in the same place. As if somebody just paused the video while I went out of the room. Or, or. As if he's the guy who's awake and this is the bloody nightmare. His bloody dream: us. Here. All of it.' (83)

In a mixture of free indirect discourse and direct speech, Gibreel fears that his reality is not real but dreamed. He considers the possibility that his dreamed self, the archangel, is real. In so doing, he lends authority to the subsequent dreamed episodes in which Mahound appears. The dreams in the text thus do not function straightforwardly as "distancing devices" or "indicators of the fictive nature of [Rushdie's] project (Rushdie, 2013, p.75). At least among those readers who experience the continual confusion of dream and reality, the dreams may stimulate precisely the opposite: a dizzying reality effect in which the dreamer is transformed into the dreamed and vice versa.

In conclusion to this section, a careful reading of responses shows that 'the affair' rests not on cultural and religious difference, but differences in reading. Supporters document their textual experiences of *The Satanic Verses* as (literary) fiction, while negative respondents insist on their material experiences of the text as (a)historical. The claims of respondents on both sides can be validated with recourse to the text. But they

also have limits. They depend on partial readings of the text, and on concealing the contingency of reading as it takes place between the text, the reading self and the self-in-the-world. I have demonstrated these limits, and reconstructed the role of the reading self and the self-in-the-world in respondents' commentaries. My reconstellation of 'the affair' has three key advantages. First, it corrects the tendency among critics to homogenise whole swathes of readers on the basis of their religious and cultural affiliations. Second, and resultantly, it allows for a more rigorous engagement with reading diversity: though one cannot be Muslim and non-Muslim at the same time, one can, and indeed must, interact with *The Satanic Verses* both textually and materially. Third, it emphasises the contingencies of reading and the variable affects to which the activity may give rise. Readers in both textualist and materialist communities can be seen to unknowingly undertake inverse interpretive operations. This undermines readers' gatekeeping of meaning by way of textualism and materialism.

2.3. A Non-Affair?

This previous section reconstituted the taken-for-granted actors in 'the affair' as avowed textualists and materialists, and, notwithstanding, emphasised the implicit hybridity of all responses. This section now highlights materialist and textualist respondents' own difficulty in maintaining their orthodoxies of reading. It registers ambivalence and contradiction in responses to *The Satanic Verses*. Supporters, or textualists, cannot help but acknowledge the text's relationship to reality and Islamic history. Offended readers, meanwhile, sometimes concede the text's fictionality as well as the ensuing partiality of their readings. By close reading responses, I seek to exploit readers' interpretive concessions. I demonstrate, finally, that even intensely overdetermined and postured readings, such as those which take place within 'the affair', are immanently material and

textual. As we will see, this means that readers in both communities agree with each other on several important points about the text and its meanings. In this light, ‘the affair’ – at least where reading is concerned – seems to be something of a non-affair, a grand narrative that serves some readers and other vested interests while failing to represent the ambivalence of many readers toward the text.

Let us begin by locating ambivalence and contradiction in responses by those defending the novel. Writing back to criticisms of the novel’s depiction of Mahound and the prostitutes at The Curtain, John Walsh, for example, argues that “[a]t no point in these imaginings does Rushdie refer to the prophet Muhammad by name, nor to the city of Mecca, nor to the Sheria law [sic], nor anything directly concerned with Islamic faith” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.33). Walsh offers a commendably even-handed commentary on what he describes as Muslim responses to the text. But ultimately, he insists on the text’s fictionality, suggesting that critics have read the Prophet and Islam into the text and ignored the narrative’s (re)imagination of faith in general. As such, it is surprising to find that, a page earlier, Walsh proposes that “Rushdie’s narrative thrust is to re-imagine, through the dreams of the film star [Gibreel], the beginnings of Islamic culture” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.33). Walsh fails to uphold his contention that, insofar as ‘Mahound’ and ‘Return to Jahilia’ do not directly reference Islam, the novel should not be interpreted as concerned with either the birth of Islam or the duplicity of its Prophet. In the place of the novel’s “ambiguity” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.31), Walsh provides an in-the-world referent: Islam. He makes this interpretive leap even though the controversial chapters make no explicit reference to Islam, as he rightly points out. In so doing, he admits that the text engenders affects, which inspire readers to develop its relationship to reality, particularly the textual history of Islam. Walsh’s

textualist defence of *The Satanic Verses* is therefore fraught with ambivalence. He momentarily gives licence to materialist criticisms of the novel's false history.

Rushdie himself exemplifies the need among supporters of the text to carve out a different discursive terrain for literature and, more importantly, the inability to do so. The author continually situates literature in a different realm to the real world, exempt from the ethics and politics of representation, in a bid to exonerate himself and his novel. We heard earlier how Rushdie differentiates fact and fiction in order to legitimise his narrative and to privilege a certain readerly orientation and interpretation. 'In Good Faith' heralds *The Satanic Verses* as fiction, and invalidates opposing responses that find correspondences between the text and the world problematic. However, there is a tension between the author's defence and his novel. Formally and thematically, the text radically calls into question the distinction between fact and fiction, as well as real and imagined, by continually foregrounding processes of historiography and narrativisation (Mondal, 2013, p.423; see also Lakshmi, 1992, p.149-153; Grant, 1999, p.3 and pp.74-76). Thus, Anshuman Mondal argues that Rushdie's insistence on a diametrical opposition between real and imagined in 'In Good Faith' contradicts the author's meditation on the arbitrariness of a distinction within the novel. It may be that Rushdie's novel actively courts a co-production of fact and fiction, thus enabling offended readers to evoke Islam and to perceive its re-imagining or distortion (as sacrilegious).

Let us take this opportunity to register Rushdie's blurring of fact and fiction in *The Satanic Verses*. I deliberately turn to passages beyond 'Mahound' and 'Return to Jahilia' here in order to contextualise these chapters' combination and distortion of real and imagined within the text's broader narrative logic. In the first chapter, the unnamed narrator conditions the telling of Gibreel and Saladin's fall from the plane with the palindrome, "*it was, and it was not so [...] it happened and it never did*" (35). A shortened

version of this phrase (variably, “it was, and it was not so” and “it was so it was not”) prefaces a number of episodes in the text. See, for example, the retrospective description of an old man’s sexual assault of Saladin (38); the story of Rosa Diamond and her late husband, Don Enrique (143); the account of Saladin’s accelerated transformation into a goat at the Shaandaar Café (275); and Gibreel’s final story of Allie Cone’s death (545). The recurrence of the phrase alerts readers to the narrative’s ill-defined notions of the real and the imagined, priming them to co-produce episodes materially and textually. The readerly production of the real depends on extratextual as well as intratextual notions of the real and the imagined. The reading self and the self-in-the-world respond to the palinode not only based on what they co-derive as real and imagined within the text, but also according to the self-in-the-world’s existing negotiation of the real and the imagined outside the text. Thus, the text’s explicit derailing of real and imagined takes place within a much broader discursive economy: the world and its construction in legal, literary and spatial discourses, for example. This means that readers may project notions of the real and the imagined into the text, particularly when the palinode arises, including but not limited to referents like Islam and its textual history. As such, Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* makes it possible for readers to infer Islamic references and their being rendered imaginary.

Several episodes and passages in *The Satanic Verses* also clearly contradict Rushdie’s retrospective, defensive account of the novel in which he separates fact and fiction. To focus on just one here, in ‘A City Visible But Unseen’, the narrator provides an account of Gibreel’s swift exit from the Earl’s Court stage during his first play since disappearing in India. We are told:

The official version of what followed, and one accepted by all the news media, was that Gibreel Farishta had been lifted out of the danger area [of baying fans] in the same winch-operated chariot in which he’d descended [...] This version proved resilient enough to survive the ‘revelation’ in

the *Voice* that the assistant stage manager in charge of the winch had not, repeat not, set it in motion after it had landed; - that, in fact the chariot remained grounded throughout the riot of the ecstatic film fans; - and that substantial sums of money had been paid to the backstage staff to persuade them to collude in the fabrication of a story which, because totally fictional, was realistic enough for the newspaper-buying public to believe. (352)

The narrator alludes to the possibility that the protagonist might actually be angelic and possess the ability to fly, contradicting Rushdie's own insistence that we read Gibreel as "a man [...] driven insane by his loss of faith" (2013, p.75). In addition, the narrator offers a critique of print media insofar as its audiences favour fiction over reality. There is thus an acute inversion of real and imagined here: we are being encouraged to perceive implausible phenomena like flying men as real, and mundane explanations like a winch-operated chariot lifting a man off stage as fabrications. In its critique of print media, this episode also calls into question the relationship between narrative and reality, which some readers may apply metafictionally to the text's own ability to convey the real, but equally which some readers may conject about the textual history of Islam (with consequences of offence).

Mondal is therefore right that, by contrast with the novel's continual blurring and inversion of fact and fiction, "[*'In Good Faith'*]" articulates a more 'empiricist' notion of history in which facts are facts, and historiography and fiction occupy radically different, even opposed, discursive terrains" (Mondal, 2013, pp.423-424). Rushdie tends to forget the text's own refrain that "facts must be 'fashioned' (the root of 'fiction', *fingere*, means 'to fashion') [...] into a 'meaning' through formal techniques of representation that invariably involve some form of narrativization, even when that narrativization is not outwardly apparent" (Mondal, 2013, p.423). '*In Good Faith*' hinges on a kind of nostalgia for positive truth values or facts that *The Satanic Verses* itself negates. However, the essay is not always capable of upholding its own distinction between fact and fiction. For

example, the author describes *The Satanic Verses*' literary form as "a way of creating the sort of distance from actuality that I felt would prevent offence being taken," before scathingly remarking, "I was wrong" (Rushdie, 1991 p.408-409). In the passage which resonates with that from *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* earlier cited, the author foregrounds the role of the reading self and its suspension of disbelief (and reality). He temporally disregards the potential of fiction to relate to and affect the world. However, Rushdie contradicts his own sense of "the word *novel*" as that which "seems to insist upon [...] see[ing] the world anew" (1991, p.393). "Fiction uses facts as a starting-place", writes Rushdie (1991, p.409). The novel emerges from and engages with the world (even if it imaginatively takes off from that world). *The Satanic Verses* necessarily invites readers to situate and interpret its alternative world in relation to that world they know and inhabit. My notion of the reader as made up of the reading self and the self-in-the-world is instructive here. The reading self is interested in how the text maintains Rushdie's "distance from actuality" and the otherworldliness of the text. But the reading self can only account for this distance by way of the self-in-the-world's conceptualisation of its material situation. Further, the reading self may only continue to process the literariness of the text by consulting with the self-in-the-world and encouraging it to realign itself (ontologically) in relation to text. Rushdie temporarily forgets or willfully ignores the fact that "distance" is relative.

It is not simply that Rushdie does not seem to possess great self-awareness about his own authorial intention, but that he continually adapts his professed aims with the text. He seems unable to ascertain the meaning of the novel himself. 'In Good Faith' may insist on a divide between fact and fiction, but it simultaneously contends that the narrative's referents are both factual and fictional. Rushdie tells us:

Jahilia [...] both 'is and is not' Mecca. Many of the details of its social life are drawn from historical research; but it is also a dream of an Indian city (its concentric street-plan deliberately recalls New Delhi), and, as Gibreel spends time in England, it becomes a dream of London too. Likewise, the religion of 'Submission' both is and is not Islam. (Rushdie, 1991, p.409).

Rushdie admits to having carried out historical research in order to develop the city of Jahilia. Elsewhere, the author has confessed that the dream episodes more broadly are based on historical reality: "[a]lmost everything in those sections – the dream sequences – starts from an historical or quasi-historical basis [...] I studied [Muhammad and Islam] as an historian" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.28). If, in one sense, Jahilia *is* representative of Mecca, and 'Submission' *is* analogous to Islam, the novel cannot assume purely fictional status. Nor can Rushdie and others wholly grant it suspension from reality and immunity to arguments concerning the politics of representation and blasphemy. His invocation of the refrain 'it was, and it was not so' serves to directly demand from readers a material and a textual engagement with the text. From another direction, the author's suggestion that Jahilia represents an imagined collision of Mecca, New Delhi and London advocates a reading of the sand city as partially real, a patchwork assembly of different realities.⁶⁷ By implication, we can say that an interpretation of Jahilia requires not that readers suspend reality, but instead that they imaginatively draw on and combine their knowledges, experiences and projections of different realities. To the extent that selves-in-the-world will possess different knowledges and experiences of Mecca, New Delhi and London according to their in-the-world, material-epistemic horizons, readers will co-construct Jahilia differently. Nonetheless, Rushdie overtly encourages readers to mutually

⁶⁷ Rushdie is not the only critic to consider Jahilia as informed by, and made up of different cities. In her reading of the novel, published in *The Guardian* in 1988, Angela Carter suggests Jahilia is partly inspired not by real cities, but by imagined literary cities. For her, Jahilia, because it is described as a desert, "gives a nod to [Italo] Calvino [author of *Collection of Sand: Essays* (1984)] and a wink to Frank Herbert [author of the *Dune* series of novels (1965-1985), set on the desert planet, Arrakis]" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.11).

apply their perception of the world (via their self-in-the-world) and to cooperatively produce Jahilia materially. Additionally, some selves-in-the-world will recognise that Jahilia bears homophonic resemblance to Jāhiliyah (جاهلية, which translates as ‘ignorance’), an Islamic concept that refers to the period before the birth of Islam. Considering that the Jahilia episodes (‘Mahound,’ ‘Return to Jahilia’ and the early pages of ‘Ayesha’) narrate the advent of the religion of ‘Submission’, the naming of the city and its depiction as barren encourage a materialist approach to the text as history.

Elsewhere, Rushdie registers both the text’s Islamic referents and the extent to which different in-the-world identities and positions grant readers access to different interpretations of his books, including *The Satanic Verses*. In an interview with Sean French in 1988, the author admits,

[the possibility of a] varied reading of my books has been true of everything I’ve written. To simplify: in England people read *Midnight’s Children* as a fantasy, in India people read it as a history book. But [in terms of *The Satanic Verses*] if you know nothing of Islam the novel still ought to work at the level of pure story. [For those readers] [i]t’s about the beginning of a religion – the question of temptation, of compromise. (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.9)

Here, Rushdie indicates how his novels make possible different interpretations. He acknowledges that geopolitical and religious associations – such as whether a reader is located in England or India, or is a Muslim or non-Muslim – affect readers’ approaches to his works and the meanings they ultimately derive. It is significant that Rushdie specifically acknowledges the historical and fantastical modes of interpretation that his novels occasion. If we agree that reading-as-history is a kind of materialist approach and that reading-as-fantasy vaguely corresponds with a textualist approach, we can infer that Rushdie celebrates the doubled existence of his text inside and outside reality. Importantly, Rushdie also justifies readers’ evocation of Islam in the text. He states that

even for those readers who “know nothing of Islam the novel still ought to work at the level of pure story.” By implication, we can say *The Satanic Verses* is about Islam, and that readers who *do* know of Islam may be affected by the text to make connections between the novel’s portrayal of ‘Submission’ and the Islamic faith. Rushdie’s admission here is in stark contrast to his argument in *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* in which he proposes that *The Satanic Verses* is concerned with “a religion not (or not quite) called Islam”, and that the text’s “distancing devices” are intended to inhibit readers from making a connection between the text world and the real, material world (Rushdie, 2013, p.75). Here, the author admits the novel’s relationship to reality and endorses a materialist reading of the text, particularly among those who know of Islam.

Although Rushdie’s acknowledgement of reading diversity and the text’s material imperatives is important here, we ought to be mindful of the way in which the author drastically oversimplifies the differences between *The Satanic Verses*’ reading communities. His binary account of readers as English or Indian, or Muslim or non-Muslim problematically overdetermines the relationship between geopolitical and religious affiliations on the one hand, and practices of reading on the other. It neglects to consider the ways in which readers perform their material and epistemic positions during reading in ways which are personal and self-contradictory, and non-identical with state or national borders, or organised religion. These particular binaries also ignore the diverse places in which the reading of Rushdie’s works takes place, tying readers uncomfortably to Rushdie’s migration history. We should therefore remain sensitive to readers’ heterogeneity and the unpredictability of their responses by any state, national or religious/secular logic.

By paying attention to the differences between Rushdie’s many commentaries about the text as well as between those commentaries and the text itself, we can see how

the author at times registers that reading takes place diversely and even validates materialist readings of *The Satanic Verses* as a revisionist history of the birth of Islam. It is only after the protests and after the fatwā is issued that Rushdie privileges a textualist reading of his novel. His priority becomes defending the novel and his life. But, even then, he is unable to sustain a coherent textualist position on the novel, littering contradictions throughout his defences of it.

Because many of *The Satanic Verses*' supporters appropriated Rushdie's commentaries on the novel in their own defences of the text, my identification of the materialist and hybrid logics at work in Rushdie's otherwise textualist readings speaks to broader trends of interpretive ambivalence and hybridity in supporting responses. That said, given Fay Weldon's strident textualism, it feels appropriate to scrutinise her comments in greater detail here. On closer inspection, we can observe moments in which she concedes the partiality of her own viewpoint and its material inflections, and in which she critiques secular liberal values as orthodoxies.

First, Weldon can be seen to indicate that writing and reading are both imprecise. This has implications for thinking about her relationship to *The Satanic Verses*. It suggests that authors and readers can neither wholly predict the text's affects and derived meanings, nor confidently claim possession of all of the text's meanings. Weldon admits that "[w]ords can only ever be approximate, mere stabs at meaning, agreed upon by a consensus to stand for this and that" (Weldon, 1989, pp.6-7). She is criticising the inflexibility of the Qur'an and perceptions of the novel as blasphemy, but she also unintentionally casts doubt on the authority of literature and reading. By emphasising language's ambiguity, she undermines the imposition of an orthodoxy of reading, and alludes to the ways in which readers realise meaning differently according to the consensuses in which they participate. In a later passage, Weldon makes clear that such

consensuses include secularism and Islam. During a rare moment of clarity, Weldon registers reading's diversity and its unpredictable connections with readers' in-the-world characteristics, experiences and knowledges. She writes: "I see [the Qur'an] as a limited and limiting text when it comes to the comprehension of what I define as God. But then I would, wouldn't I?" (1989, p.12). Weldon reminds us that the presence of the 'I' within reading as well as writing prevents the derivation of objective meaning or truth. She foregrounds how, in the absence of objectivity, all interpretations are partial.⁶⁸ Notably, Weldon shows a perceptive understanding of how her own positionality (as a professedly atheist, feminist individual) affects her view of the Qur'an. We might extend her self-critique of her reading of the Qur'an, and reflect on the subjectivity at play in her laudatory evaluation of *The Satanic Verses*. In other words, if we agree that her view of the Qur'an is shaped by material and epistemic (including cultural-religious) forces which often lie beyond her purview, we must also recognise that her view of *The Satanic Verses* is similarly inflected by these forces.

Reading Weldon's argument in this way would suggest that she cannot possibly be sure of *The Satanic Verses*' merit or the validity of her own reading of it. Her comments above implicitly allow for other readings of the novel (including more materialist and/or condemnatory approaches). Furthermore, her explicit self-recognition as an atheist acts

⁶⁸ Like Weldon, supporting respondent, Nisha Puri implicitly registers the potential impossibility of understanding the novel in his review in the Indian Post. Despite high praise for the novel and its author, he confesses: "*The Satanic Verses* is not an easy read in most of its densely written parts" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.13). He highlights the possibility that some of its meanings and implications evade him, i.e. that a textualist approach may be insufficient for meaning-making. Tellingly, and despite lauding Rushdie's "daring creativity" and "his most ambitious fictional endeavour", Puri goes on to concede that "the combative arena [...] include[s] India and England, past and present, private and public histories and the imperatives of time and space" as well as "a sideways brush with the World in the Desert or the coming of Islam" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, pp.13-15). In other words, he materialises its referents. It is worth noting that fellow supporter of Rushdie and the novel, Damien Grant also offers an albeit less convincing admission of his partiality. He briefly admits that, although, "it is hard [for him] to understand the grounds for real offence [...], like the retina, the imagination itself has its blind spots. [...] [A] different structure of consciousness might find such a radical exercise in scepticism as the novel conducts to be intolerable, even repugnant" (Grant, 1992, p.92). Note that Grant is speaking as a free speech advocate, not a textualist here. He has in fact always acknowledged *The Satanic Verses*' Islamic influences, but not their potential for offence.

as a corrective to the tendency among supporters of the novel to universalise their readings, and Rushdie's own self-endorsements as author. Yet, it also combats her own overdeterminations of reading and identity elsewhere by foregrounding the role of individual positionality (the 'I') over notions of collective identity (for example, binaries of Muslims/non-Muslim and West/East). Indeed, in places, she is keen to highlight the limits of collective identities and their attendant orthodoxies. She briefly alludes to the way in which the public cultural-religious and ideological bracing on either side of 'the affair' forecloses possible interpretations of *The Satanic Verses*. She criticises the normativity engendered by not only Islam, but secular liberalism, writing:

Difficult for any of us, in this world, to say what we mean. Our friends, our keepers, are listening. Easier to see the world through our keepers' eyes than see for ourselves. Not just easier, safer. The elders might throw me out of the mosque: my husband might divorce me, my lover might leave me. Rushdie should die: I'm not a feminist. (Weldon, 1989, p.11)

We earlier observed that Weldon tends to oversimplify divergent interpretations as representative of an opposition between a civilised secularity and a fundamentalist Islam. Here, however, she contextualises both as orthodoxies, ideational systems that interpellate actors to perform certain roles. She construes both materialist interpretations of the novel as blasphemy, and textualist interpretations of the novel as fiction and a celebration of free speech as approximations of "what we mean". Both readings are the orthodoxies on offer from "our keepers". Additionally, she highlights that such orthodoxies grant identity-recognition. "[S]ee[ing] for ourselves" is, by contrast, to risk becoming abject.⁶⁹ Readers either side of 'the affair' can therefore be seen to adopt pre-

⁶⁹ John le Carré similarly points to the obtrusiveness of 'the affair,' intimating how the debate foreclosed alternative responses and limited the affects available for particular, in-the-world identities. Indeed, the British spy novelist knows all too well the abjection that arises from resisting what is made available through his "keepers' eyes" having been targeted by Rushdie and his supporters for speaking out against the novel. In a reflection on his own critical intervention in 2012, le Carré expressed his regret at the public feud between himself and Rushdie, but admitted: "I am a little proud, in retrospect, that I spoke against the easy trend, reckoning with the wrath of outraged western intellectuals, and suffering it in all its righteous glory" (The Guardian Research Department, 2012, np). Le Carré recognises the primacy of "western"

constructed views in order to achieve pre-determined identities. As concepts which entail collective identities and collective values and ideas, Islam and secularism are said to translate individuals' experiences into a different register that is non-identical with their individual beliefs and experiences. This is perhaps the paradox of self-identity – that it relies upon the translation or displacement of the self through a collective register. By drawing in herself as “a feminist”, Weldon makes explicit the interpretive obligations faced by all readers, as well as the threat of abjection facing those who fail to adopt one of the two codified responses to the novel. She thus disputes her own characterisations of Islam as constraining compared with secularism/Christianity, finding that secular liberal views are similarly limiting. Importantly, this entails registering the links between supporting respondents' textualist appraisals of the text's merit and their material and epistemic positionality. Thus, Weldon effectively registers the inseparability of the textual and the material, the reciprocity of the reading self and the self-the-world, in the production of meaning. She entertains the hybridity of her own response to *The Satanic Verses*.

So far, we have identified moments in which supporting respondents dispute their own textualist orthodoxies of reading. We have registered the way in which they variously acknowledge the partiality of their accounts, the variability of meaning, and the degree to which *The Satanic Verses* is concerned with reality and the historical record of Islam. Having considered the interpretive ambivalences and concessions of supporting critics, let us move now to consider opposing critics' inability to enforce their own materialist orthodoxies of reading. To this end, I focus especially on moments in which offended readers recognise the text as literary fiction. I find that just as Rushdie and his supporters

(secular) intellectualism and the way in his bodily integrity in the world is dependent upon adherence to this ontological horizon. By describing these intellectual (textualist) approaches as “the easy trend,” le Carré, like Weldon, draws attention to the limitations of orthodoxies of reading.

undermine their own textualist readings of the novel, so too do negative respondents contradict their own materialist responses to it.

First, a spokesperson for the Islamic Defence Council, one of the organisations lobbying for support among Muslims for the book's banning, seems to recognise *The Satanic Verses* as a work of fiction. They argue that *The Satanic Verses* fails to offer a valid critique of Islam insofar as it thwarts the maxims of historical accuracy. In a statement, reported in the *Chiswick, Fulham & Hammersmith Recorder*, a representative for the council argued: "We do not object to anyone writing critically about Islam – there are hundreds of such books in our libraries – but as you see these *Satanic Verses* belong to an entirely different genre" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.78).⁷⁰ The spokesperson for the Islamic Defence Council criticises *The Satanic Verses* for reasons that the text is not concerned with presenting an accurate account of Islam from which to critique Muslims' faith. But what is most interesting here is that they suggest the text "belong[s] to an entirely different genre" than critical history. The spokesperson may intend to convey the severity of the novel's maltreatment of Islam. But they inadvertently indicate the text's belonging to the genre of fiction, and thus undermine the legitimacy of the organisation's critique of *The Satanic Verses*' misrepresentation of Islamic history. The Islamic Defence Council's representative registers, if unwittingly, that, as fiction, the text is fated to dispense with history. They acknowledge that it exceeds materialist readings and the discursive terms by which it has been judged by the Islamic Defence Council as well as other detractors.

⁷⁰ This statement made by the spokesperson reflects the position which The Islamic Defence Council took in the formal petition it made to Penguin Books, *The Satanic Verses*' publisher. In the petition, the organisation wrote: "We are not objecting to anyone writing critically or irreverently about Islam or Muslims. Hundreds of such works have been published in the past and hundreds more are going to be published in the future" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.80).

In a related vein, President of Iran Ali Khamenei (who would later become Ruhollah Khomeini's successor as the Supreme Leader of Iran) explicitly recognises *The Satanic Verses* as fiction. Three days after the Ayatollah announced a fatwā on Rushdie, and during his second sermon at Friday prayers at Tehran University, Khamenei admitted, "The book is of course fictional; it is a story" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.88). He continues: "Aside from being a sin in the eyes of the law, religion and humanity, this dirtying of literature and arts was an ugly deed" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.88). President Khamenei thus describes *The Satanic Verses* not only as an insulting reinterpretation of Islamic history, but also as a novel that does not deserve its place in the history of literature let alone to be hurriedly translated and disseminated around the world. His response to the text is thus acutely hybrid; he judges it by both religious criteria and a system of literary value. Moreover, his admission that the text is "fictional; [...] a story" draws attention to his reading self's textualising activities. It highlights the role of interpretation in his construction of the text as both a bad history and a bad novel. Khamenei therefore momentarily illuminates the partiality of materialist responses to the text, such as his own.

Other offended readers have acknowledged the potential partiality of their accounts. Earlier, we witnessed Shabbir Akhtar encourage Muslims to express their offence at *The Satanic Verses*' vilification of the Prophet Muhammad. Yet, Akhtar regularly signals his inability to comprehend the text, and so casts doubt on the authority of his materialist interpretation of it as blasphemous. For example, he twice qualifies his account of the novel with the phrase "in so far as [the text] is intelligible" (Akhtar, 1989, p.3, p.14). He deems it "worth saying that many parts of *The Satanic Verses* defy comprehension and tire even the sympathetic reader" (Akhtar, 1989, p.17). Akhtar's professed inability to understand the novel indicates the limits of his reading and the

extent to which other (perhaps more textualist) readings are possible. Importantly, he proceeds to criticise *The Satanic Verses* in textualist terms. He argues: “[Rushdie] is often self-indulgent, caring little for the reader puzzled by the complexity or incoherence – whichever sounds better – in some of the passages” (Akhtar, 1989, p.17). Fellow opposing respondent Syed Ali Ashraf has similarly taken Rushdie to task for his poor writing, stating: “Where he failed miserably is in portraying people’s feelings when they see the transformation of Saladin or Gibreel as if these are normal things. [...] His attempt to mix normalcy and fairy tale myths created by him do not carry conviction” (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.26). These are clearly criticisms of the novel. However, their logic is textual rather than material. Akhtar and Ashraf here describe the text not as a bad history, but as a bad work of fiction. For Akhtar, it is self-indulgent, meandering, and complex for complexity’s sake. For Ashraf, it is not sufficiently believable or realistic. Both grant the text the category of fiction here, which they otherwise deny it. In so doing, both undermine the appropriateness of materialist readings.

We have previously seen supporting critic Fay Weldon admit that reading and writing are imprecise. Opposing critic Shabbir Akhtar arrives at a similar conclusion in a way that threatens both the text’s authority over its meaning and his own ability to name its intent. He suggests:

Controversial books [such as *The Satanic Verses*] can cause wars – not necessarily because they preach in its favour but because even divinely inspired doctrines, in frail human custody, are liable to be misunderstood. How much more so in the case of our human, all too human, writings. The pen, in the wrong hands, is no less dangerous than the sword. (Akhtar, 1989, p.36)

Here, Akhtar registers Rushdie’s inability to conceive of the consequences of his writing – which is to say, the impossibility of knowing how affects translate into effects. Being “human, all too human” prevents the literary author from envisaging the damaging affects and effects of his prose outside of his own “frail human custody”. But Akhtar’s notion

that “our human, all too human, writings” breed misunderstanding also obliquely signposts the possible misunderstandings that arise from our all too human readings. The reading process, too, involves the handling of textual information within “frail human custody”, through which meanings are “liable to be misunderstood”. ‘Misunderstanding’ may be catachrestic. It implies the objectivity of understanding, and the precedence of one interpretation over another. Rather than suggest our being human intimates misunderstanding, let us adapt his sentiment to assert that, “within frail human custody”, meanings are guaranteed to be *interpreted*. The particularity of the interpretive frame we bring to bear on the text, and the meanings we derive through the oscillation of our reading self and our self-in-the-world create a multiplicity of possible affects and meanings. Akhtar unwittingly cedes authority to the affects of reading.

It is significant that Akhtar registers the affects of reading with a variation of the well-known adage ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. The phrase dates back to Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s 1839 play, *Richelieu; Or the Conspiracy*, a dramatisation of the life of French Foreign Secretary and the Louis XIII’s First Minister, Cardinal Richelieu. Akhtar is likely using the phrase in reference to its contestation in *The Satanic Verses*. In the ‘Mahound’ episode, after Baal the poet has taunted the Grandee Karim Abu Simbel about his wife’s adultery and his fear of Mahound, Abu Simbel regains his composure only by slighting the power of Baal’s dexterity with language: “Here’s a great lie, thinks the Grandee of Jahilia drifting into sleep: the pen is mightier than the sword” (102). The significance of Akhtar reading Rushdie (himself reading Bulwer-Lytton) is twofold. First, Rushdie’s adaptive reading of Bulwer-Lytton and his translation of Cardinal Richelieu’s fictional words into the mouth of Abu Simbel is anachronistic. Authenticated as belonging to the sixth century, the Grandee could not possibly recite an adapted version of Bulwer-Lytton’s proverb coined over a thousand years later. Abu Simbel’s inversion

of the famous idiom may of course work by a linear temporality if readers recognise Abu Simbel as a character fabricated by Gibreel Farishta's dreamwork. Gibreel of the 1980s, after all, may be familiar with the proverb and may translate it into the mouth of the Grandee. However, we know from reading materialist responses to *The Satanic Verses* that readers often forget the narrative framing of the Jahilia episodes within Gibreel's dreams. Second, Rushdie consults a literary source not a religious one for the characterisation of Abu Simbel. The polytheistic, fictional leader of Jahilia⁷¹ draws on the words of French First Minister Cardinal Richelieu, as fictionalised in former British Secretary of State for the Colonies Bulwer-Lytton's 1839 play. The irruption of the phrase in the novel is thus temporally and discursively disruptive. As such, the adapted proverb thus challenges the text and readers' authentication of the Grandee and Jahilia's reality, making explicit the fictionality of the Jahilia episodes. Simultaneously, the proverb's intrusion may be seen to insist on the larger reality of the text insofar as it encourages readers to position Gibreel and *The Satanic Verses* within our literary culture. Gibreel must in some sense inhabit our world or he would not have access to Bulwer-Lytton's play and could not project the adapted adage into Abu Simbel's mouth. My point here is not simply that the text's appropriation of the proverb 'the pen is mightier than the sword' itself courts hybrid readings. More significantly, Akhtar's evocation of the phrase in his religious reading of *The Satanic Verses* uncannily parallels the fictional Abu Simbel's adaptation of the phrase in the novel. Like Abu Simbel, Akhtar's argument about the novel's intrinsic mistreatment of the sacred ultimately derives its authority not from a religious truth, as we might expect, but from a literary proverb 'the pen is mightier than the sword'. In other words, he attempts to wrench the Qur'anic narrative back from

⁷¹ In an interview with Madhu Jain, Rushdie admits his fictionalisation of Abu Simbel, suggesting: "I have given the name of an Egyptian temple, Abu Simbel, to the leader of Mecca" (Appignanesi and Maitland, 1989, p.39).

Rushdie's "frail human custody" only to bestow the text's meaning and ontological status to another "all too human" author: politician and writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton. This would suggest that Akhtar covertly operates textualist practices of reading – and writing – in his materialist reading and writing about the Qur'an and Islam.

In conclusion, a careful reading of responses to *The Satanic Verses* shows us that neither materialist nor textualist respondents offer entirely coherent orthodoxies of reading. Supporting and opposing critics alike find it difficult to sustain their monological reading strategies. This phenomenon speaks to reading's hybridity and the affects of reading. By identifying the interpretive concessions made by critics either side of 'the affair', I have been able to show the ideas and approaches that members of both groups share. As a corollary, I have disputed homogenising and essentialising characterisations of respondents, and reintroduced the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation to one of reception history's most divisive issues.

2.4. The Case of Proper London

Having argued that both textualist and materialist readings are in fact contaminated by their opposites, I now offer a highly selective and non-exhaustive reading of *The Satanic Verses* in order to highlight why and to what extent this is the case. I do not seek to intervene in the debates of the affair as such, but to complicate the models of reading that both sides assume. What is at stake is not the status of the novel, but the status of reading more generally. My aim is to legitimise (more) textualist and (more) materialist approaches alike, even though the act of reading remains immanently hybrid. As I register possible readings of the novel, it will become clear that there is variety in reading that cannot be accounted for by any existing cultural-religious affiliations readers may have. This is important given that 'the affair' withholds evidence of materialist readings that

draw on registers and resources other than secular liberalism and Islam, instead perpetuating a cultural and religious divide between so-called free-speech-championing Westerners and fundamentalist Muslims. We will see that materialist readings are not purely cultural-religious or retrograde in the sense of being rooted in identity politics. They more expansively refer to practices in which, during reading, readers as selves-in-the-world perform existing knowledges and experiences of the world, including religious registers, but also perception and memory, and personal reading histories. The performative aspects of materialism and textualism are important because they accommodate diversity and mutability among readers, and the extent to which our embodied actions exceed our self-identities and identities affixed to us. This analysis of how *The Satanic Verses* ‘reads’ sets in place both my sustained contestation of the relationship between reading and identity, and my move towards the democratisation of reading publics later in the thesis.

Let us start from the beginning. Following the preliminaries, the text begins with a prologue from Daniel Defoe’s *The History of the Devil* in which the devil is described as both rootless and as possessing an “angelic nature” ([ix]). A chapter title page follows, bearing the words “1 The Angel Gibreel” ([x]). When the chapter itself introduces Gibreel Farishta, readers are thus primed to recognise him as an angel figure who, by an inverse logic, may have a devilish nature. This context is important as it may offer an explanation as to why, when Gibreel takes up the role of Mahound in his dreams, the prophet Mahound is not stably divine but always at risk of satanic influence. In any case, the narrator proceeds to tell of the descent of protagonists, Sala(hud)din Chamcha(wala) and Gibreel Farishta as they tumble to earth after the aircraft on which they were travelling, ‘*Bostan*’ Flight AI-420, is blown apart. (At the end of the chapter, we learn that the plane was hijacked and blown up by suicide bomber Tavleen). The narrator informs us that the

two characters undertake a death-defying (and reality-defying) fall “towards the English Channel” (3). The narrative thus asks readers to both suspend disbelief of the two men’s fall and to evoke the geopolitical reality of England, acts that require the co-participation of the reading self and the self-in-the-world respectively. Of course, depending on selves-in-the-worlds’ particular performance of their horizons, readers will coordinate the activities of their reading self and self-in-the-world differently. To provide some possible examples of this diversity, those that ethnicise or nationalise the characters’ names or who comprehend that AI-420 refers to an Air India flight may furnish the scene of the protagonists’ atypical arrival in England with notions of cultural, national or legal non-belonging, giving rise to responses ranging from an ethnonationalist-inspired fear or loathing to self-critical empathy. Depending on readers’ relationship with England, it may be that the self-in-the-world constructs England as foreign. Some selves-in-the-world may also recognise the novel as migrant fiction having banked previous experiences of reading (however hybrid) as material – as knowledge. Accordingly, these selves-in-the-world may affect their reading self counterparts to project themes of belonging, nation and home into the narrative. These key differences notwithstanding, the opening tableau solicits hybrid, material and textual acts of reading. Moreover the reading self’s textualising operations and the self-in-the-world’s materialising operations are co-informing: the reading self cannot suspend disbelief without the self-in-the-world’s sense of what is possible or real; similarly, the self-in-the-world cannot embellish the referent of England without the reading self first encountering its anachronistic usage in the text.

The protagonists share with the as yet-unknown and extradiegetic narrator a perception of where they are headed. As they fall from the sky, Gibreel Farishta calls to a less enthusiastic Saladin Chamcha,

‘Hey, Spoono,’ [...] ‘Proper London, bhai! Here we come! Those bastards down there won’t know what hit them. [...] Out of thin air,

baby. *Dharrraaamm!* Wham, na? What an entrance, yaar. I swear: splat.' (3)

Gibreel tells us that their destination is “Proper London”; both protagonists as well as the narrator and other characters repeatedly articulate the city in this way. Applying the self-in-the-world’s linguistic competency, the reading self may interpret the meaning of ‘proper’ as the real or actual. The naming of the city may therefore encourage the self-in-the-world to evoke London and affect the reading self to process Proper London through its sense of a parallel (if approximate) London. However, because the text capitalises ‘proper’ and incorporates it into the proper noun ‘London’, the reading self may be affected to communicate the distinctness of Proper London from its namesake. It may articulate Proper London’s imagined status to the self-in-the-world, which is moved to acknowledge the city as separate from the real city with which it is in varying degrees familiar. The naming of Proper London thus engenders different processes of readerly recursion, which are themselves hybrid and which hybridise one another.

The potential hybridity of Proper London builds over the course of the narrative. Sometimes, it seems to solicit ideas of propriety. We are encouraged to produce Proper London both as a London of acceptability and as an accepted understanding of London. These disparate meanings are linked to Gibreel and Saladin’s distinct voices and viewpoints. As we can detect in the above passage through his dramatisation of the two characters’ fall, Gibreel Farishta perceives Proper London as ignorant and mundane. This is consistent with the narrator’s later description of Gibreel as he “for whom all things English are worthy of derision instead of praise” and, appropriating Gibreel’s voice, the narrator’s sense that Gibreel had “always sneered at the place, Proper London, Vilayet, the English, Spoono, what cold fish they are” (425-426). For Gibreel Farishta, the ‘properness’ of Proper London is its pretension, lack of feeling and austerity. The city is

sanitised, holds nothing on the exuberance of Bombay and is merely a place for him to hide out, unaccountable, until the furore of his lover Rekha Merchant's suicide dies down. Gibreel therefore brings into play ideas about Proper London as a space of acceptability, which thwarts purportedly more real experiences. By contrast, Saladin Chamcha is a self-professed Anglophile. He expresses Vilayet (which comes to mean 'England') as his destiny (37). When he finds a wallet filled with British pounds as a child, he covets them as symbols of England as a land of prosperity and opportunity. As Chattopadhyay has suggested, Saladin is filled with "the promise of a utopian England overlaid with the possibility of removing oneself from the perceived sordidness of an Indian reality" (2018, p.9). Proper London's up-standing reputation is to be lauded for Saladin, loathed for Gibreel.

Between Gibreel and Saladin's manifestations of Proper London, there is clearly interpretive work to be done. The reading self's management of their disparate perspectives may engender realisations around the confluence of spatial propriety and accepted conceptions of the city. But each character's perspective alone also solicits doubled responses that engage with the imaginative construction of reality. Focusing on Saladin Chamcha's vantage point, his utopian dream of England manifests as an obsession with its capital city. Look at the following passage:

It seemed to [Saladin] that everything loathsome, everything he had come to revile about his home town, had come together in the stranger's bony embrace, and now that he had escaped that evil skeleton he must also escape Bombay, or die. He began to concentrate fiercely upon this idea, to fix his will upon it at all times, eating shitting sleeping, convincing himself that he could make the miracle happen even without his father's lamp to help him out. He dreamed of flying out of his bedroom window to discover that there, below him, was – not Bombay – but Proper London itself, Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen [...] until he was screaming headfirst down towards the city, Saintpauls, Puddinglane, Threadneedlestreet, zeroing in on London like a bomb. (38-39)

This passage encourages us to recognise Proper London as familiar and to appreciate Saladin's imagined construction of the city. He conjures Proper London as the home of "Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen [...], Saintpauls, Puddinglane, [and] Threadneedlestreet" (38). The appearance of these cultural landmarks likely thwarts the reading self's production of the narrative as fictional. The reading self hence calls on the self-in-the-world, which – depending on its epistemic and experiential resources – locates them in London, in reality. The self-in-the-world may affect the reading self to treat the landmarks as synecdoche for a real counterpart. Yet, the stylised narration of these iconic institutions and locations simultaneously triggers an inverse interpretive operation. First, these iconic landmarks' narrated existence takes place within a dream. The text continually refers to Saladin's sense of Proper London as dream-like, as in "Proper London in the fabled country of Vilayet" (35) and "that dream-Vilayet of poise and moderation" (37). Proper London's explicit proximity to dream alludes to the way in which Saladin realises the city by way of a kind of fetishism.⁷² Moreover, the narrator explicitly links this particular dream to Saladin's experience of sexual assault as a thirteen-year-old boy at Scandal Point, recounted in detail in the immediately preceding paragraph. The referents and their possible reality are therefore made dubious by their associations with Saladin's conscious and unconscious desires for escape. They become objects of wish fulfilment. Second, the manner in the which the narrator articulates these

⁷² Fetishism masks reality, even as it marks that reality in the insistence of the masking. This definition accords with Marx's elaboration of (commodity) fetishism, and Freudian psychoanalysis' treatment of the fetish. For Marx, fetishism refers to the way in which "man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him" (Marx, 1976, p.163). He provides the example of the production of a table from wood. The conceptualisation of individual labour and the social relations that make the table a table – which is to say, the symbolic – intercept the wood's material existence (Marx, 1976, pp.164-65). This fetishism does not stop the table from also being wood. Fetishism symbolically imbibes the object with new reality properties as a technique of social regulation, precisely because the table is wood. Freud, meanwhile, speaks at length about the fetishisation of the phallus (see 2001b, pp.135-230). He also discusses different patients' fetishes, including one's fetish for noses (see 2001a, p.152). Anne McClintock (1995) offers the best account of the way in which psychic fetishism registers reality precisely in its 'disavowal' of that reality.

signifiers of Proper London limits their reality-conveying abilities. It collates them, removes ‘standard’ grammar and typographical elements like word spacing. In so doing, the narrative negatively solicits notions of ‘standard’ grammar, encouraging the self-in-the-world to bring to bear existing ideas about reality’s (more or less faithful) composition in language. Whether a given self-in-the-world is more or less invested in the relationship between language and reality matters less here than whether they possess knowledge of the paradigmatic approach to reality as made self-obvious through (‘standard’) language. The self-in-the-world may therefore be moved to project via the reading self the sense that the narrator is fabricating a partial reality. Importantly, because of the taking place of the reverse interpretive operation by which Proper London is made real, some selves-in-the-world may be affected to assimilate their experience of the text’s construction of Proper London into their own cultural imaginary of London. Put simply, readers may acknowledge that London, like Proper London, exists in part through the imaginative capacities of language and actors’ selective use of language for a finite range of representations. The specificity of the icons of Proper London chosen here supports this reading. Big Ben, Nelson’s Column, Lord’s Tavern, the Tower of London, St Paul’s Cathedral, Pudding Lane and Threadneedle Street together compile an image of London as a timeless, imperial metropolis – pervasive in the early nineteenth century and today in tourism brochures. The landmarks celebrate London’s centrality to Britain’s national identity, as well as the nation’s imperial past, its cricketing reputation, its monarchy, its religion, its history, and its economy. They are iconic of highly specific British histories and cultural characteristics. And they are strikingly disembodied. In his dream of flying over Proper London, he witnesses no one – just these architectural configurations. The text therefore encourages the self-in-the-world to dispute the landmarks’ representativeness of those histories and cultural traditions by foregrounding the act of

writing or storytelling that precedes their referentiality. It furthermore stirs us to think about what these constructions and their pervasiveness conceal, such as human labour and lived experience, including the exploitation of people.

We may also recognise in the passage above that the narrator realises Proper London through forms of incantation. The ritual of speaking Big Ben, Nelson's Column, Lord's Tavern, the Tower of London, St Paul's Cathedral, Pudding Lane and Threadneedle Street seems to manifest Proper London. Our reading selves may or may not attribute these incantations to Saladin given that they appear in the narrative without speech marks. However, the narrator often seems to don the voices of both protagonists in free indirect discourse. Moreover, in an earlier episode, the text explicitly links incantations to Saladin, allowing us to link this ritualistic manifestation of Proper London through landmarks and monuments to the protagonist. It is recounted that, as a child, Saladin used to compulsively repeat (Proper) London in acts of playful invention. During his favourite childhood game of grandmother's footsteps, "he would turn his back on upcreeping playmates to gabble out, like a mantra, like a spell, the six letters of his dream-city, *ellowen deeowen*" (37). We are encouraged to recognise London in this anachronistic spell, but also to appreciate its being brought into existence through Saladin's acts of faith and imagining. As John McLeod has suggested, *Ellowen deeowen*'s typographical deconstruction of London into its constituent phonemes (L O N D O N) foregrounds London's construction in language, thus "shred[ding] Saladin's comfortable Anglophone fiction" (McLeod, 2004, p.149). The city is literally manifest as an accumulation of letters here. Yet, Saladin's repetition of *ellowen deeowen* also participates in the perpetuation of his comfortable Anglophone and Anglophilic fiction. Saladin repeats *ellowen deeowen* "like a mantra, like a spell", fabricating its existence. Moreover, this recollection's narrated proximity to the episode overleaf in which he

dreams of a highly particular Anglophone, if disembodied, London encourages readers to recognise ellowen deeowen's parochial referentialism. Saladin's particular vocalisation of Proper London thus solicits a hybrid response through which we both materialise and textualise its relationship to London, or through which we dispute and guarantee Proper London's reality. We are primed for the text's discursive liminality.

As can be seen in the above quotation, immediately following Saladin's recitation of "Bigben Nelsonscolumn Lordstavern Bloodytower Queen" and "Saintpauls, Puddinglane, Threadneedlestreet", the narrative states that Saladin is "zeroing in on London like a bomb" (39). This simile may motivate readers to effectively repopulate the otherwise disembodied Proper London, and to consider the racial, ethnic and class associations that attend upon belonging in the city. A bomb is threatening, destructive, and transformative. The comparison of Saladin and a bomb may therefore be seen to foreshadow the hostility with which Saladin is met, his prejudicial treatment and his subsequent discovery of Proper London as a kind of fiction. The description here thus inspires reading selves to furnish Saladin's embodied selfhood in relation to his belonging in Proper London, a task for which they must recruit the participation of the self-in-the-world and its knowledge of stratified belongings in London. Different selves-in-the-worlds may possess different degrees of knowledge and self-awareness about communities' vexed relationship with London. That knowledge and self-awareness may grow if confrontations with Saladin's subsequent racialised transformation and maltreatment on arrival in England are partially materialised as relevant to the England outside the text. But, importantly, we are being moved to deploy our existing apprehensions of London in order to process Proper London and Saladin's relationship to the city. This involves working against his imaginative monumentalisation of Proper London through signifiers of an exclusive London, insofar as this operation obscures the

different forms of embodiment available in the city.⁷³ We are therefore inspired to participate and co-construct narrative foreshadowing because of the ironic distance between Saladin's hybrid construction of Proper London and our own hybrid notions of Proper London. It is therefore not so much that "the 'reality' of a 'respectable' London as it is imagined and projected by Salahuddin" in the first chapter gives way to "a nightmarish image of London" in which the protagonist is subject to crude stereotyping and physical violence (Stadtler, 2014, p.106). In fact, what the text tutors the reading self and the self-in-the-world to co-identify is that this unreal, symbolic and actual violence is structurally embedded within the conventional reality of the city (in which Saladin invests). Inversely, we are primed to recognise the potential reality of Saladin's nightmarish predicament when it arrives in the third chapter 'Elloven Deeowen'. From this chapter onwards, Saladin is "drawn 'under' into a series of invisible-city experiences" (Parashkevova, 2012, p.73) whose reality he had previously denied, and whose visibility in the text disturbs and demands a reconceptualisation of what we understand by reality. The text encourages readers to identify that both projections – "the 'reality' of a 'respectable' London" and "a nightmarish image of London" – mutually inhabit the real and the imagined, and that this is their mutual truth.

This description of Saladin "zeroing in on London like a bomb" (39) may for some readers uncannily recall the novel's beginning in which Gibreel and Saladin fall toward London like a "[m]eteor or lightning or vengeance of God" (3), and as the result of a suicide bomb. However, readers who recognise this description as proleptic may also be moved to register its disruptive temporality: the protagonists' life-altering fall takes place later in the story (if earlier in the plot) than Saladin's childhood. The reading

⁷³ In line with Barthes' usage in *Mythologies* (1957, pp.74-76), I employ 'monumentalisation' to refer to an acutely dehistoricising and therefore mystificatory mode of perception.

self may resultantly be affected to pay attention to structures of parallelism and repetition. Certainly, *The Satanic Verses* multiply rewards focuses on doubling. We have observed the parallelism at work in the text's representation of Mahound's wives and the prostitutes, but there are also significant doubles that traverse the even-numbered, Jahilia chapters and the odd-numbered present-day chapters. Thematically, one could think here of Mahound climbing Cone Mountain, and Allie Cone climbing Everest, as well as Gibreel's mistress Rekha Merchant climbing Everest Vilas before plunging to her death by suicide, and Gibreel's partner Allie Cone falling from the top of Everest Vilas to her death near the end of the novel.⁷⁴ We could also recall the text's many parallel naming conventions. Allie Cone clearly recalls Cone Mountain. But, additionally, we have Hind, the powerful wife of Karim Abu Simbel in the 'Mahound' chapter, and Hind Sufyan, Muhammad Sufyan's wife of the Shaandaar Café in Brickhall; Mishal Akhtar, wife of Mirza Saeed in the 'Ayesha' chapter, and Mishal Sufyan, daughter of Muhammad and Hind of the Shaandaar Café; Bilal X, an American convert to Islam and servant of the exiled Imam, and Bilal the slave and loyal disciple of Mahound, alongside Salman and Khalid the water-carrier; and Khalid the water-carrier and discipline of Mahound, and Khalid, the Imam's son, who notably "enters [the Imam's] sanctum bearing a glass of water" when he is first introduced (209).

So far, we have focused on how Gibreel and Saladin stimulate different readerly co-productions of Proper London, thus setting in motion a series of recursive loops through which readers must continually reorganise the city's relationship to reality. For all their differences, Gibreel and Saladin both imply that Proper London exists within the

⁷⁴ Gillian Gane has noted the frequency with which the novel depicts rises and falls. Alongside the parallelism of Rekha Merchant and Allie Cone's deaths, Gane also notes that Allie's father, the Holocaust survivor Otto Cone jumps to his death down an elevator shaft, and that Pamela Lovelace's parents also die by suicide after jumping from a building in London (2004, p.24).

internal reality of the text, even if its associations with a London external to the text are dubious and even if it makes London's own reality suspect. As I now show, the narrator of the text contests the proposed internal reality of Proper London, interrupting and contradicting both protagonists' vantage points. The first-person, narratorly voice intervenes throughout the narrative, offering supplementary accounts of events as they unfold. They often frame their contributions as attempts to 'correct' the narrative's course and steer readers toward particular interpretations of events. The narrator's intervening character is accentuated by their insistence on direct address. For example, the narrator deliberates with readers on the protagonists' transformative fall:

What characteristics which? Slow down; you think Creation happens in a rush? So then, neither does revelation...take a look at the pair of them. Notice anything unusual? Just two brown men, falling hard, nothing so new about that, you may think; climbed too high, got above themselves, flew too close to the sun, is that it?

That's not it. Listen [...] (5)

The narrator sardonically makes use of rhetorical questions, direct address and imperatives in a manner that constructs readers as addressees. Specifically, the narrator projects readers' inaccurate responses, and indicates to them that they – or, at least, their readings – are themselves being read. The narrator anticipates that, in the face of the indeterminacy of the protagonists' fall, readers will have drawn on material resources such as ethnic and xenophobic prejudices and/or the story of Icarus in Greek mythology. The narrator goes on to challenge these assumptions, demanding of readers: "Listen." What is interesting here is that the narrator recites such materialist readings in order to forbid or discredit them. In denial, they therefore validate the possibility of materialist readings because "denial is always a retroactive process; a half acknowledgment of that Otherness which has left its traumatic mark" (Bhabha, 2008, p.xxxiii). Acknowledgement is a condition of effacement. By negation, the narrator encourages us first to adopt such

materialist orientations to the two men's fall, and second to discard these orientations in favour of one derived from the text's reality structures. They therefore position Gibreel and Saladin's fate somewhere between real and imagined. Even as the narrator overtly stimulates the self-in-the-world's self-critique of the limits of its assumptions and priorities, they simultaneously import such assumptions and priorities, necessitating the self-in-the-world's materialising labour.

If we consider the narrator's intervention more broadly within the context of the text's construction of Proper London, the narrator here undermines the narrative's relationship to reality. These metafictional devices disturb the internal reality of the scene. As "a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations" (Waugh, 2003, p.2), metafiction warrants a hybrid response capable of investing in the text's powers of construction and, simultaneously, its disputation of narrative credibility. It signals reality's foundations in language (or the imaginary), and language's inability to represent reality or, more accurately, its invention of reality.

In the passage above, the narrator presents as an extradiegetic, omniscient figure. Readers may find the narrator's presumed extradiegesis and omniscience strange given their first-person vantage point. Such suspicions are rewarded over the course of reading *The Satanic Verses*. It becomes clear that the narrator is not always prepared to impart their superior knowledge to the characters or to us as addressees, and that they are not always entirely outside narrative action. This is significant for readers' co-production of the text's reality and its relationship to readers' realities because it means that we are tutored to reserve distrust for the text's internal reality. We are also moved to conceptualise Gibreel and Saladin's reality in the text as taking place within a much larger internal reality, inhabited by the narrator when they aren't intruding on narrative events.

Hints of the narrator's ambiguous location and their ambiguous sense of responsibility to the truth litter the narrative, for example in the narrator's initial refusal to tell the story of Gibreel's part in Rekha Merchant's suicide (see 14, 15, 25). But the narrator also explicitly draws attention to both their liminal position inside and outside the internal reality co-constructed by characters, and their refusal to intervene in the (false) consecration of that reality. In 'The Angel Azrael', the narrator responds to Saladin's questioning of the existence of the angelic and the diabolic by insisting:

I'm saying nothing. Don't ask me to clear things up one way or the other; the time of revelation is long gone. The rules of Creation are pretty clear: you set things up, you make them thus and so, and then you let them roll. Where's the pleasure if you're always intervening to give hints, change the rules, fix the fights? Well, I've been pretty self-controlled up to this point and I don't plan to spoil things now. Don't think I haven't wanted to butt in; I have, plenty of times. And once, it's true, I did. I sat on Alleluia Cone's bed and spoke to the superstar, Gibreel. *Ooparvala or Neechayvala*, he wanted to know, and I didn't enlighten him; I certainly don't intend to blab to this confused Chamcha instead.

I'm leaving now. The man's going to sleep. (408-409)

The narrator confirms their intrusion in prior narrative action. They are the Godly apparition who Gibreel sees after an argument with his lover Allie Cone. The "Supreme Being" is said to be "a man of about the same age as [Gibreel], of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the jaw" (318). The man is also "balding, seeming to suffer from dandruff and [wearing] glasses" (318). This earlier description may prompt selves-in-the-world to recognise Salman Rushdie himself as the God-like omniscient narrator/creator of the text world. In this sense, it may blur the boundaries of reality and the internal world of the text. But, more importantly here, the later passage makes clear that the characters inhabit a world whose meaning they fabricate, and which is unassimilable with the *real* internal world of the text, created by the narrator/author-God. Moreover, this narrator/author-God implies that he might have

intervened on numerous occasions to clarify reality but is observing self-control. We are led to believe that the characters have discursively falsified reality several times over, and in moments we were never made aware of. The narrator's intervention here may therefore inspire the reading self and the self-in-the-world to recall, refine or dismantle their previous organisation of the textual and the material. Additionally, the earlier episode in which the author-God speaks to Gibreel (authenticated as real by this later episode) suggests that Gibreel was never psychotic for believing he was an angel. We may therefore have to self-critique our appraisals of his condition, and entertain religious explanations of Gibreel and Saladin's peculiar embodiments.

This later narratorial intrusion offers important insight into the ways in which the text continually ensures that narrative structures and reality overlap and bleed into one another. It perfectly encapsulates the manipulated proximity of the present-day Proper London narrative, the Jahilia narrative, the larger text world of the narrator/author-God in which these takes place, and reality in which the narrator/author-God has a distinctive counterpart in Rushdie. But let us return to the text's beginning and register how the narrator's very first intervention threatens characters' constitution of the text's internal reality, including the reality of Proper London. Immediately after Gibreel's call to arms – ““Proper London, bhai! Here we come! Those bastards down there won't know what hit them”” (3) – the narrator offers an alternative account of the protagonists' fall from the sky. It reads:

Out of thin air: a big bang, followed by falling stars. A universal beginning, a miniature echo of the birth of time...the jumbo jet *Bostan*, Flight AI-420, blew apart without any warning, high above the great, rotting, beautiful, snow-white, illuminated city, Mahagonny, Babylon, Alphaville. But Gibreel has already named it, I mustn't interfere: Proper London, capital of Vilayet, winked blinked nodded in the night. (4)

The narrator rehearses the secular, cosmological origin of the universe, an approach that their later self-identification as God contests. They engage in paradox to describe the city toward which Gibreel and Saladin fall. It is both “rotting” and “beautiful.” It is “snow-white,” and yet also “illuminated.” These incongruent descriptors move the reading self to grant the city both textual imaginaries. The reading self must develop a liminal understanding of the city which can host oppositional propositions. The narrator also calls into question Gibreel’s identification of Proper London. They signal the viability of alternate readings of the city (as Mahagonny, Babylon and/or Alphaville), before withdrawing that possibility and insisting on Gibreel’s rendition. As in the first example of the narrator’s intrusion, the trace of that which is negated (Mahagonny, Alphaville and Babylon) remains. Whether we processed Gibreel’s opening portrayal of Proper London (as austere and unfeeling) as more or less evocative of London is unimportant. The narrator generates uncertainty in our interpretive convictions that Proper London is a referent. Most obviously, their invocation of Mahagonny, Babylon and Alphaville resists the self-in-the-world’s recognition of Proper London as London by offering alternative identities for the city.⁷⁵ But it also frustrates the reading self’s ability to imaginatively locate itself in Proper London by removing the (fictional) ground from beneath it. This passage positions Proper London as imagined in a different way than we have seen previously. It makes explicit that Gibreel’s articulation of the city is an act of invention, and casts doubt on Saladin’s later identification of Proper London. In turn, it supplies alternative realities for Proper London. Notwithstanding this interpretive renewal, the narrator maintains the reading self and the self-in-the-world’s obligation to Proper London: “I mustn’t interfere: Proper London, capital of Vilayet, winked blinked nodded in the night” (4). The narrator therefore places the onus on the reading self and the self-

⁷⁵ Note that (Proper) London and Babylon are, at one point, amalgamated in the novel as “Babylondon” (459).

in-the-world to consider what is materially and textually transacted between Proper London, Mahagonny, Babylon and Alphaville.

Despite the narrator's insistence on the city's *reality* as Mahagonny, Babylon and Alphaville, none of these cities is straightforwardly real or imagined. They exist in other texts and discursive domains. Selves-in-the-world may or may not possess prior knowledge of these referents. Put another way, their intertextuality is not guaranteed. But those selves-in-the-world who do recognise the alternative names for Proper London as real and imagined cities may be prompted to produce Proper London as the site of multiple discursive contestations.

Mahagonny recalls the satirical opera *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, first performed in 1930. The opera was composed by Kurt Weill and penned by Berthold Brecht, who famously asserted "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it" (McLaren and Leonard, 1993, p.80). It follows three fugitives (Fatty the Bookkeeper, Trinity Moses and Leocadia Begbick) who, having headed north to evade capture by the state police, decide to establish a city of their own defined by masculine hedonism. Mahagonny, in all its abundance and decadence, begins as a lucrative business opportunity for the three. They trade in gold, whiskey and women. It also serves as a space of refuge for those disillusioned by the futility and corruption of the old cities. However, towards the end of Act 2 and during the final act, the suspension of the old reality on which Mahagonny depends starts to falter. A visitor to the city, Jimmy Mahoney, is unable to clear his debt with Begbick; consequently, Moses sentences him to death and, at the gallows, callously denies Jimmy his last rites. The curtain falls as the city descends into irrevocable chaos.

What readers find in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* is an imagined space (of violence, state-sponsored capitalism and coeval destitution) that is authenticated as reality. Within this fictional space, there takes place the fabrication of a new reality in the form of the city of Mahagonny. But the reality of Mahagonny gives way to its negative counterpart when it finds itself accommodating economic and legal practices from the reality it was intended to leave behind. It becomes other, alien to its reality. Schultz argues that the opera is an exploration of real and imagined's imbrication that has implications for the ways we navigate our own world. For her, Brecht "reconstruct[s], then deconstruct[s] the alliance of the myth of equivalence with the magic of escape, exposing their social origins: inequality and a fettered imagination" (Schultz, 1998, p.314). She finds that Mahagonny perpetuates ideals of equality and opportunity only in order to emphasise their impossibility and the way in which they are ideologically-bound to a reality of socioeconomic disparity. In striking consonance, we might remember how Saladin establishes the reparative (utopic) socio-economic myths of migration by way of a monumentalisation of Proper London, but this mechanism of representation reveals the instability of such myths and the ethnic- and class-based realities that they obscure. For our interests, Schultz locates the genealogy of the real in the imagined city of Mahagonny (insofar as its negative reality defines itself both in opposition to capitalism and in complementarity with the myths of capitalism). And she identifies in the coercive, capitalist reality the imagined possibility of escape and an alternative socioeconomic order.

Schultz considers how the text's co-articulation of the real and the imagined reverberates with the myths that undergird readers' own realities. In other words, she traces how its thematisation of the inseparability of real and imagined resonates with the real and imagined character of readers' own realities. Some critics of the opera go further

and suggest that the text communicates the reality of capitalist acceleration in North America. In a 1995 review of a performance of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, Bernard Holland comments: “The Weill-Brecht collaboration formulates an America (for though unspecified, this country it surely is) reminiscent of Franz Kafka’s in the unfinished novel ‘Amerika’” (1995, np). Rokem similarly argues that the opera “just like Kafka’s novel, is situated in an imagined America of decadence, exploitation, and a gradually growing exilic estrangement” (Rokem, 2009, p.120). Comparisons between *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and ‘Amerika’ may be a fruitful line of inquiry. But most interestingly here for us, both Holland and Rokem perform materialist readings that situate Mahagonny in the world – in North America. Their readings testify to the extent to which the opera transacts a specific verisimilitude with the reading self that means it must interact with self-in-the-world and apply a material frame of reference. Interestingly, this perceived verisimilitude may derive less from conceptions of any existing America, than from Kafka’s depiction of America in ‘Amerika’. Put simply, we have Holland and Rokem identifying the real referent America in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* through a reading of another fictional text, Kafka’s ‘Amerika’. This clearly shows the latent textualism of materialising operations, a phenomenon that has to do in part with the ways in which cultural imaginaries produced by literary texts come to inform reality. But it also shows that even determinedly fictional texts prompt readerly materialisations. Materialism is a condition of reading.

Neither Holland nor Rokem justify their materialisation of Mahagonny in America beyond citing the interest of the Americas in the European cultural imaginary of the time (Holland, 1995, np; Rokem, 2009, p.121). However, in support of their claims, we might consider the way in which one of the play’s most popular songs, ‘The Moon of Alabama’ directly references a south-eastern American state, and note that this evocative

song title was retained in German- and English-language performances. Yet, Kurt Weill insists that *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* was never intended to be an allegory of twentieth-century America. In a letter to his publishers (reproduced in an article by David Drew, translator of the English edition of the opera), Weill argues:

the use of American names for *Mahagonny* runs the risk of establishing a wholly false idea of Americanism, Wildwest, or such like. [...] I ask you to include the following note in the piano score and libretto: [...] ‘In view of the fact that those amusements of man which can be had for money are always everywhere exactly the same, and because the Amusement-Town of Mahagonny is thus international in the widest sense, the names of the leading characters can be changed into customary [*ie* local] forms at any given time. (quoted in Drew, 1963, p.19; original clarification)

Weill warns against fixing the play’s meaning and its location in America. He argues that because capitalism (and its discontents) is a global phenomenon, writers and producers ought not to restrict Mahagonny’s material resonances to America. He makes a case for adapting the play according to the location of performances in order to emphasise the universality of its themes. Though Weill’s remarks advocate for material renderings of the text (albeit more spatially expansive than some of his critics allow), his insistence on the mutability of the text signals its imagined, textual status. The text “can be changed” and thus its (universal) reality is textual and variable. Both between and within Kurt Weill, Bernard Holland, Freddie Rokem and Karla Schultz’s readings, what we find is that Mahagonny is distinctly hybrid. This seems to be its intertextual imperative in *The Satanic Verses*.

Babylon here functions in a similarly hybrid way.⁷⁶ It evokes the real Mesopotamian kingdom of Babylon, which was built on the Euphrates river around 1,770

⁷⁶ We should note that Rushdie deploys Babylon not just as an alternative name for Proper London but also for Jerusalem. In ‘Ayesha,’ before the introduction of the main narrative, the Imam (with the voice of Bilal, the slave from ‘Mahound’) erupts into Gibreel’s dreamscape and orders that he fly to Jerusalem. As the Imam mounts Gibreel’s back, the protagonist considers the journey ahead: “Jerusalem, he wonders, which way is that? – And then, it’s a slippery word, Jerusalem, it can be an idea as well as a place: a goal, an

BCE on the site of the original Akkadian settlement of Babylon (circa. 2,300 BCE), and which now lies ruined in present-day Iraq. But it also has an imagined existence within the Tanakh/Old Testament and the Rastafari belief system. Readers may choose to mobilise any or all of these referents at the mention of Babylon in *The Satanic Verses*, with consequences for their material and textual activities. For example, producing Proper London as the Mesopotamian city might see the reading self subordinate Proper London's associations with London to the level of the discursive or imaginary, which entails doubting the protagonists' ability to convey the reality of the text world. It may see the self-in-the-world invoke its knowledge of Babylon (for example, as an imperial metropolis and a site of imperial contest and expansion) and, via the reading self, register the imperial histories being negotiated between Proper London and Babylon. This may move the self-in-the-world to differently materialise Proper London – and even London – as the seat of empire. This is only one reading; projecting Babylon into the text as Proper London opens up a variety of affective channels. Moreover, its discursive history in different sociopolitical and religious systems renders Babylon's historic existence unstable.

Let us consider in more detail the significance of Babylon in Jewish and Christian imaginaries. In Bereishit/the Book of Genesis, it is said that, originally, “the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech” (Genesis 11:1).⁷⁷ Humanity attempts to build “a city [Babylon] and a tower [the Tower of Babel], whose top may reach unto heaven”

exaltation. Where is the Imam's Jerusalem? ‘The fall of the harlot,’ the disembodied voice resounds in his ears. ‘Her crash, the Babylonian whore’” (212). What follows is a description of the Jerusalem ridge of the Judean mountains but the ambiguity has already been introduced. By making reference to the Whore of Babylon and situating her in Jerusalem, Rushdie invokes the preterist interpretation of Babylon as Jerusalem. This reference to preterist hermeneutics in general to the extent that it foregrounds processes of interpretation, only furthers the ambiguity of reading.

⁷⁷ For ease and convention, I opt to quote only from the King James Bible here, rather than both the Bible and the Tanakh. Note that the Christian narrative and the Jewish narrative scarcely differ; the Old Testament is derived from the Tanakh.

(Genesis 11:4). But they are thwarted by God who “confound[ed] their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” and “scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:7-8). The biblical Babylon is oppressive and hellish; it is literally antithetical to God’s wishes. And the city’s mast, the Tower of Babel, is depicted as a symbol of tyranny in as much as it serves to culturally, linguistically and ontologically unite the Babylonian community. Yeshayahu/the Book of Isaiah later describes Babylon as a woman, prone to “sorceries” and “enchantments” (Isaiah 47:9). Yeshayahu/Isaiah prophesies her death, depicting Babylon as home to false cosmologies and religions and suggesting that, along with non-believers in God, she will be burned (Isaiah 47:13-14). John the Apostle sustains this personification of Babylon in the biblical New Testament’s Book of Revelation. In Revelation 17 and 18, he introduces the figure of the Whore of Babylon as both a sinful harlot and the anthropomorphic representation of Babylon, “that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the Earth” (Revelation 17:18). She compounds Babylon’s immorality, riding a devil-like creature with “seven heads and ten horns,” each horn crowned and each head bearing a blasphemous name (Revelation 17:3). Whilst she rides the beast, the Whore drinks from “a golden cup...full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (Revelation 17:4). She is described as “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:6). She likewise presides over “devils” “foul spirits” and “every unclean and hateful bird” (Revelation 18:2). As we can observe in the preceding descriptions, in the Book of Revelation, Babylon functions as synecdoche for the alternative faiths that challenge belief in God. She embodies blasphemy. Yeshayahu/the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Revelation’s sustained personification of Babylon marks a radical departure from the first reality of Babylon as a city that we encounter in the Bereishit/Book of Genesis.

What I mean to emphasise is that, within the Tanakh and the Bible themselves, Babylon is both authenticated as real and imaginatively personified in the image of the Whore.

The depiction of Babylon as a Whore also introduces a central thematic of *The Satanic Verses*: moral relativism. To explain, despite the Whore of Babylon's clear association with blasphemy, when John the Apostle, the narrator of the Book of Revelation, first sees her, he "wonder[s] with great admiration" (Revelation 17.6). Her awesome appearance atop the beast, her might and perhaps her sexual voraciousness cause him, contra his faith, to marvel. An angel ultimately convinces John of her impurity and reminds him that the Whore of Babylon's rule is fragile. Nevertheless, John's initial wonder and admiration for the Whore complicate absolutist perceptions of good and evil. On this reading of the Book of Revelation, the latent moral ambiguity of Babylon intimates *The Satanic Verses*' concern with the difficulty of distinguishing good and evil. It anticipates the way in which the novel enacts a dual embodiment of good and evil in Gibreel and Saladin whose angelic and demonic moralities are unstable, conjoined and relational.

Babylon of course does not only feature in Christian and Jewish belief. It is also central in Rastafari sociopolitical and religious belief. Rastafaris translate the hellish, biblical Babylon to variously signify:

the entire post-colonial western power structure and its supporting ideology and political apparatus; the oppressive condition of 'exile' in the Black diaspora; the cosmic domain presided over by the pope of Rome and his Anglo-European cohorts; the source of death-dealing and destructive spiritual power.⁷⁸ (Edmonds, 1997, p.24)

⁷⁸ In a footnote to his chapter, 'Reggae as a Rastafari Poetic of Disenchantment,' Eldon V. Birthwright also notes that "[a] subsidiary meaning of the word *Babylon* refers to the police as an agent of *the system*" (Birthwright, 2011, p.272; original emphasis). This is consistent with Ennis B. Edmonds commentary in which he suggests that "[f]or Rastas the most hated element of the Babylonian system consists of those who are 'dressed in uniforms of brutality,' that is, the police" (Edmonds, 1998, p.26). Edmonds links this "equation of law enforcement with Babylon" back to the Jamaican police's historic persecution of Rastas

Babylon therefore signals Western political, economic, cultural and religious forms of oppression. At the same time, it denotes a kind of exilic ‘dread’ condition, associated with histories of indentured servitude and slavery suffered by black people,⁷⁹ and with the sense that members of African diasporas remain displaced. Nonetheless, Babylon is not just something that Rastas “chant down” (Murrell, 1998, p.1). As Edmonds clarifies: “Babylon constitutes a symbolic delegitimation of those Western values and institutions that historically have exercised control over the masses of the African diaspora” (Edmonds, 1998, p.24). The Rastafari usage of Babylon implicates Western, capitalist societies in the cultural, political and economic subordination of black people in an effort to induce the West’s destruction. The Rastafari Babylon is therefore severally underpinned by imaginative acts of rewriting and (re)creating reality. It delegitimises Western claims for supremacy by repositioning the West within a socio-politically and ideologically hellish Babylon. It reconstitutes the West’s reality as premised on and complicit with the subordination of ‘black consciousness’. Rastafari Babylon also attempts to precipitate a new reality.

Notably, some writers have creatively relocated Rastafari Babylon in London. British-Guyanese writer, Fred D’Aguiar evokes London as Babylon in his poem ‘Dread’, collected in *British Subjects* (1993) (see McLeod, 2004, pp.173-74). Jamaican-born poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson uses ‘dread talk’ and similarly situates Babylon at least symbolically in London (see McLeod, 2004, pp.132-34). John McLeod’s chapter on

(Edmonds, 1998, p.26). Babylon thus represents the oppression of black people on a micro- and macro-scale.

⁷⁹ Rastas acutely experience what European accounts of time as linear would render the past. Today’s Rastas bear the embodied memories of displacement, slavery and violence associated with the transatlantic slave trade of the 1500s to the 1900s. As Edmonds writes: “Most painful for Rastas is the memory of the Middle Passage – the experience on the slave ships from West Africa to the New World – and their subsequent suffering in modern Babylon. The manner in which Rastas speak of the Middle Passage and the institution of slavery reveals that they still bear the psychic scars of those experiences. They seem to reach back across the years to feel the pain and indignity of everything that befell their foreparents” (1998, p.25).

Johnson is itself named after London-based, anti-racism band, The Ruts' 1979 single, 'Babylon's Burning'.⁸⁰ The song – which includes the lyrics, "It's [Babylon's] positively smouldering/ With ignorance and hate" – borrows Rastafari symbolism in an effort to highlight the latent racism of London and the United Kingdom more broadly (The Ruts, 1979). Babylon's Rastafari associations may therefore also encourage readers to evoke the oppressive realities faced by non-white people, histories that may foreshadow Gibreel and Saladin's self-commodification as well as Saladin's racist treatment.

Babylon thus exists multiply between the material and the textual. This is not simply because there exists a real, ancient kingdom of Babylon and narrated, Christian, Jewish and Rastafari renditions of the city. It is because these religious and sociopolitical imaginaries depict Babylon's palimpsestic existence and, moreover, because they render each other textual in their acts of realisation. Babylon exists between Christianity and Judaism (whose respective realities may contest each other, if not necessarily render each other imaginary). Babylon occupies an intermediary position between the city of Babylon in Bereishit/Genesis (authenticated as real) and the biblical personification of Babylon in Yeshayahu/Isaiah and Revelation (imagined). It exists between the Rastafari perception of Babylon (authenticated as real) and the Tanakh or Bible's rendition of Babylon at large (in turn, manifest as imagined). And Babylon is stationed between London (real) and the Rastafari notion of Babylon (rendered imaginative or poetic). I offer these as possible permutations of real and imagined, as constructed by the discursive traditions themselves. However, readers may of course draw on their knowledges of the discursive histories of Babylon, and reorganise them as real or imagined depending on their vantage point and investment in such belief systems.

⁸⁰ I am grateful to Professor John McLeod for sharing with me his inspiration for the chapter's title.

Alphaville complements Babylon and Mahagonny's disruption of the material and the textual. Alphaville invites as an intertext Jean-Luc Godard's film *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (*Alphaville: A Strange Adventure of Lemmy Caution*) (1965).⁸¹ Like Babylon and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* engages with ideas of truth and alternate realities. The film combines genres of science fiction, detective fiction and film noir to tell of the eponymous special agent's mission to destroy the highly-intelligent computer system, Alpha 60 (after which the technocratic state of Alphaville is named). Built by Professor von Braun, Alpha 60's role is to monopolise meaning – literally, “to minimize unknown quantities”) – in response to the perceived threat of meaninglessness (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:38:47).⁸² We might consider the Tower of Babylon as representative of a similar anxiety. Like the first humans of Babylon, Alpha 60 fears a time when “[t]he meaning of words, and of expressions, is no longer grasped. An isolated word, or a detail of a design can be understood. But the meaning of the whole escapes” (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:34:59-00:35:18). The computer system's reinforcement of the rule of logic is manifest in its policing of citizens' thought and emotions. Doubt and subjectivity are erased. For example, the word ‘why’ is replaced with ‘because’ (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:52:34-00:52:38). Words like ‘love’, ‘compassion’ and ‘sadness’ are eradicated from inhabitants' vocabulary and even their cognition. In an early scene, for example, Natacha von Braun, admits to Lemmy that she does not know what either ‘love’ or ‘courting’ means (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:13:18-00:15:08). Those who display

⁸¹ During a 2005 interview, Rushdie admitted to having seen and been influenced by Godard's *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (see Livings, 2005, np).

⁸² For the sake of relevance, I provide all quotations from the film in English, derived from the subtitles.

emotions, meanwhile, are publicly executed. Lemmy witnesses this phenomenon first-hand. Standing in a spectator's gallery above a swimming pool, he watches on as the condemned are made to walk the plank, shot, and then surrounded and submerged by female synchronised swimmers (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:42:15-00:44:18). Ultimately, Lemmy Caution successfully thwarts Alpha 60's logic and dominion by posing a riddle that the computer cannot answer.⁸³ Alpha 60 would have to concede its monopoly of logic in order to do so. As the agent says confidently to the computer: "if you find [the answer to the riddle] you will destroy yourself simultaneously" (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 1:23:10).

Notwithstanding the way in which *Alphaville*'s dystopian themes and its overt employment of science fiction tropes (such as advanced technologies) invite an imaginative, textual reading, the film complicates such straightforward renderings by implying a parallel, verisimilitudinous reality. This is to say, *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* recognises the city of Alphaville as unreal. In the absence of a more real internal reality, readers are invited to enact materialist readings that make sense of Alphaville's irregularities by way of selves-in-the-world's existing notions of reality. Lemmy Caution explicitly highlights Alphaville's discursive instability. After shooting an intruder in his hotel, he rues to Beatrice, a third-class seductress: "All things weird are normal in this whore of cities" (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 00:07:37-00:07:42). Alphaville is surreal and bizarre to Lemmy but nonetheless real. He inhabits the city – it is his reality – but he alludes here to a coexistent worldly reality outside of and relative to Alphaville. Because of Alphaville's highly surreal elements, readers are likely to assume that Lemmy's unseen internal reality is

⁸³ The riddle is as follows: "Something which never changes, day or night. The past represents its future, it advances as a straight line yet it ends by coming full circle. I cannot trace it. I won't tell you" (*Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*, 1965, 01:22:45-01:23:01). The answer, one assumes, is a human.

closer to readers' own than that of Alphaville. The text therefore insists simultaneously on its distance from readers' realities (by creative, speculative representation) and its proximity to their realities (by calling attention to its own imagination).⁸⁴

Folding together the cities of Alphaville, Babylon and Mahagonny, what is transacted between them, and what some readers may derive from their inclusion as alternative names for *The Satanic Verses*' Proper London, is a concern with ontic and epistemic authoritarianism. All three referents conjure a kind of totalitarian regime – whose form is political-economic in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, religious and sociopolitical as relates to Babylon, and technological in *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*. And each thematically considers these realities' paradoxical erasure of reality and censorship of truth. They register the failure of these realities, thus locating within reality the imaginary. Subsequently, they chart the emergence of plurality or other ways of being in and knowing the city. The narrator of *The Satanic Verses*' collocation of Mahagonny, Babylon and Alphaville augments each referent's contestatory potential by encouraging readers to evoke each referent in mutually affective ways. Readers are invited to transact affects between them with the possibility of not only deriving their mutual questioning of ontic and epistemic formations, but also of tracing how each referent's reality structures complicate the others' constructions of reality. Put simply, the self-in-the-world cannot locate *The Satanic Verses*' narrator and protagonists in Mahagonny, a Christian Babylon, a Jewish Babylon, a diabolically human Babylon, a Rastafari Babylon, and Alphaville at the same time. Thus, it is the accumulation of referents, together with the referents' representations of reality as liminal, that thwarts selves-in-the-world's assimilation of them as Proper London.

⁸⁴ The text's distance from and proximity to reality is also embodied by its production. Godard's *Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* was filmed in Paris; the fictional city was literally overlaid atop Paris and no props or sets were used.

In conclusion, from the beginning, *The Satanic Verses* invites readers to enact materialising and textualising acts of reading, and to develop an intermediary standpoint from which to comprehend Proper London's hybrid relationship to its namesake. However, these intermediary standpoints are acutely provisional. The time-flow of reading continually puts the meanings transacted between readers and the text at risk of de-constitution. This is especially the case considering *The Satanic Verses*' movement between the different viewpoints of the protagonists and the narrator. Readers therefore continue to be tested by the text to create new, more flexible standpoints and to move between more and less material and textual vantage points in order to maintain the intelligibility of Proper London. In its polysemous potential, the 'proper' of Proper London continually reminds us of our inability to coincide completely with the text's horizon. It keeps affects in play, allowing meaning to be endlessly transacted between the Proper London of the text and readers' conceptions of London beyond the text. This creates opportunities for readers to build more permeable, more self-reflexive and more critical approaches to not just London and its cultural history, but also the spaces they inhabit and produce. My analysis of the first few pages of the novel is important in this chapter because it shows the wide range of practices associated with more materialist readings, and because it ratifies more and less materialist and textualist responses to *The Satanic Verses*.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that dominant narratives about *The Satanic Verses*' reception creates oppositional cultural-religious and geopolitical communities by selectively reading responses to the novel, and by too easily coupling reading and cultural, religious and national/spatial affiliations. In an effort to better represent the diversity of responses

to the text, and the diversity of Muslim and non-Muslim reading communities, I have rearticulated ‘the affair’ as an affair of reading. Readers either read the text more materially, locating it and its referents in the world, or they read it more textually, studiously suspending disbelief and worldly resonances. Crucially, readers’ responses to *The Satanic Verses* are nonetheless always hybrid. For example, textualist celebrations of the text’s creativity see readers mobilise particular worldly formations of literary value, while materialist denigrations of the text as blasphemy rely on readers imaginatively producing the text’s referents as metaphors and intertexts. And determinedly textualist responses sometimes acknowledge either their own participation in acts of materialism, or the legitimacy of others doing so. Likewise, avowedly materialist responses explicitly engage textualist readings or entertain the viability of textualist readings. This ambivalence of readers’ responses to *The Satanic Verses* is unsurprising when one returns to the text itself. Its different narrative perspectives and registers continually complicate the derivation of real and imagined. From the very beginning, the text encourages readers’ to invest in its reality, and that textual reality’s relationship to reality, only to withdraw its support for that reality and insist that readers’ revise their production of the material and the textual.

In the wider context of the thesis, this chapter’s demystification and diversification of *The Satanic Verses*’ reception is important for three key reasons. First, it demonstrates that reading is not straightforwardly linked to identity, personal or collective. Reading entails a *performance* of the self, which exceeds even self-identity. Second, it shows that reading is hybrid, always immanently material and textual. Third, it circumvents notions of reading as more or less accurate by insisting on the affects of reading, which allows for the validation the diverse practices of a range of different actors. As this thesis progresses, we will regularly re-establish and nuance these claims. The

legitimacy of reading's essential diversity is especially key to the next chapter, which highlights the diverse ways in which Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008) can and has been read. Following our discussion of Proper London in this chapter's final section, Chapter 3 sustains a focus on the ways in which readers' different relationships to space and spatial production – which are informed by, but ultimately irreducible to their geopolitical location – affects their readings of the novel at hand.

3. Translating the production of space in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008)

Building on Chapter 2's account of the reading of *Proper London*, this chapter explores the relationship between reading and space. It refines my notion of reading's material and textual hybridity by understanding reading as both informed by the location in which the act takes place, and as space-traversing and space-producing. It applies this refined theory of reading to Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* and its reception. Effectively, the chapter elaborates the diverse ways in which reading hybridises a given text and its production of space. Section One articulates reading as translation. Specifically, foreignisation and domestication represent the epistemic activities of the reading self and the self-in-the-world. Taking its lead from the linguistic and spatial connotations of translation, Section Two plots the relationship between language and space. It coordinates Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and Tony Crowley's characterisation of the English language 'standard' in order to theorise the notion of the spatial 'standard'. Sections Three and Four draw on actual responses to *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* in order to show the ways in which readers undertake a foreignising and domesticating translation of its production of space. Section Three explores the way in which the novel's hybrid form as a diary/dictionary solicits readings that variously reproduce the spatial 'standard' and dispute the spatial 'standard'. Section Four considers the extent to which the lover's ambiguous identity as 'you' invites readers to both identify and non-identify with his role as tutor in the language and spatial 'standards'. I show that between these foreignising and domesticating activities, readers gain the opportunity to inhabit and estrange the

spatial ‘standard’. This chapter’s comprehension of how readers translate the text’s production of space intervenes in current conceptions of the relationship between reading and space, by diversifying readers’ space-making acts. It also disputes postcolonial studies’ leading assumptions about readers outside the academy insofar as it shows that those readers often engage with texts in highly critical and self-reflexive ways, and are prepared to ‘read against the grain’, so to speak, in cases where they feel implicated in space’s marginalisation or oppression of characters.

3.1. Reading as Translation

Originally published in 2007, Xiaolu Guo’s third novel and first written in English, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* gained the author significant global attention. The novel was shortlisted for the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007 and is her most widely translated work to date. It follows protagonist and narrator, Zhuang Xiao Qiao – or Z, as she becomes known – for the duration of her year-long stay in London, where she learns English at a private language school. Z’s trip and her education are funded by her parents who believe that an education in English will enable her to expand their shoe-making business in China.⁸⁵ Motivated by the novel’s formal and thematic concerns with language and the relationship between English and Chinese,

⁸⁵ I take as read the place of China and Chinese Literature in postcolonial studies. My understanding of the postcolonial as an effect of reading allows for the inclusion of all manner of texts. Furthermore, China has a distinctive history of imperialism and colonialism. Formerly an empire itself, the region has also been subject to imperial influence, particularly prior to and during the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1860) (see Barlow, 1997; Brook and Wakabayashi, 2000; Hanes and Sanello, 2002; Hevia, 2003). The Cultural Revolution shaped the liberation movements and struggles of colonies and semi-colonies in Africa, Asia and South America (Young, 2001, p.182-188; see also Dirlik, 2014). This is the case even though, today, the People’s Republic of China continues to engage in internal colonialism (consider the state’s treatment of Tibet and Taiwan as well as indigenous Uyghurs and Tajiks in Xinjiang). The People’s Republic of China also participates in forms of imperial expansion in parts of Africa, particularly the exploitation of natural resources, precisely through an economic approach of ‘political non-interference’ (Rupp, 2008, p.82; see also Vines and Campos, 2010; Lee and Shalmon, 2008). The state and the nation, however, remain subject to imperial and orientalist discourses (Vukovich, 2012), including Sinophobia and the revival of the ‘yellow peril’ discourse (Golooba-Mutebi, 2018).

critical commentators tend to focus on the novel's exploration of bi- or translingualism (Poon, 2013; Oboe, 2013; Spyra, 2016), its dramatisation of linguistic translation (Doloughan, 2009; Gilmour, 2012) or its reflections on linguistic translation as cultural and social translation (Doloughan, 2015). Amongst critics, the text has come to reflect a kind of 'translatory consciousness' the origin of which is "living between languages," to borrow the title of Rachel Gilmour's essay. Before we focus on the text and its engagement with language and linguistic translation, it is important to foreground the relationship between translation and reading. Recalling the etymological roots of 'translate' in the Latin verb 'transferre' (past participle, *translātus*), meaning 'to transfer' or 'to bring across' (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019), this section uses translation as a concept metaphor for reading. It considers how texts inspire us to translate them toward us and translate ourselves toward them. In an extension of Wolfgang Iser's description of reading as a form of translation (2000, p.5), I elaborate that reading is organised by the foreignising translation of the reading self and the domesticating translation of the self-in-the-world. These terms help to accentuate the linguistic and spatial, and therefore epistemic, transformations that take place during reading. They also register the twinned ethics and politics of reading and producing space.

Translation has conventionally been associated with the site of production rather than consumption. Though translation is an act of reading (Spivak, 1993, pp.179-183), it is widely understood to constitute part of the literary *work* rather than the literary *text*. This is because its task is to render itself invisible (Venuti, 2004, p.1), to insist that it takes place before the act of reading proper. Yet, clearly a translator must read a given literary text, often more than once, in order to translate it and hence re-read it (Cook, 1986, p.145). Scholars of literary translation have exploited the ambivalence of translation, since it variously implies a prior reading, constitutes a reading, and conceals

the act of reading. In arguments inflected by the concerns of postcolonial and indigenous studies as well as world and comparative literature studies, scholars have considered the continuities between contemporary literary translation and the epistemic technologies of empire. The terms ‘foreignisation’ and ‘domestication’ have gained significant currency in such intellectual arenas. These terms account for the differing strategies of reading that underpin translation. It has been argued that, in the context of the global literary marketplace, translators effectively have two choices: “they can either take readers back to the source text, or bring that source over to their readers” (Bassnett, 2004, p.72); they can “sen[d] the reader abroad” or “brin[g] the author back home” (Venuti, 2004, p.20). Following Friedrich Schleiermacher, both Lawrence Venuti and Susan Bassnett describe translations that move readers toward the text as ‘foreignising’. Conversely, they describe translations that move the text toward readers as ‘domesticating’ or ‘acculturating’ (see Venuti, 2004, p.20; Bassnett, 2004, p.72). From a postcolonial perspective, there are problems associated with each of these approaches to translation. Briefly, insofar as domestication presumes cultural and linguistic transparency, it conceals its “ethnocentric violence” (Venuti, 2004, p.22) and its “neocolonialist construction of the non-Western scene” (Spivak, 1993, p.181). As Spivak signals, domestication tends to be utilised, and serve the interests of the West. Venuti similarly draws attention to an “Anglo-American tradition of domestication” (Venuti, 2004, p.23; see also Bassnett, 2004, p.72). Foreignisation meanwhile can invite readers to interpret other cultures and literary traditions “as a negative case of a primitive, or decadent, strand that must be avoided or rooted out at home; or, more neutrally, as an image of radical otherness against which the home tradition can be more clearly defined” (Damrosch, 2003, p.14). Or foreignisation may more perniciously foster “the celebration of nationally and ethnically branded

‘differences’ that have been niche-marketed as commercialized ‘identities’” (Apter, 2014, p.346).⁸⁶

Such accounts of foreignisation and domestication immediately conjure issues relating to reading. Practices of literary translation are conveyed as practices of reading, which either engage in forms of cultural appropriation in the spirit of cosmopolitanism (domestication) or perpetuate and monetise cultural differences (foreignisation). They are also seen to invite distinctive practices of reading, which are characterised either by pernicious forms of empathy (domestication) or by primitivisation and othering (foreignisation). Foreignisation and domestication as practices of translation may be inevitable, but their implied readings need not be. In the face of foreignising and domesticating literary translations, Venuti advocates “symptomatic reading” (Venuti, 2004, p.24). Symptomatic reading is intended to ‘diagnose’ the symbolic violence committed against original material by translators, and to mitigate readers’ reproduction of that violence. It involves the active, self-reflexive deployment of foreignisation and domestication. As he explains, readers ought to strive to “foreignize a domesticating translation by showing where it is discontinuous” (Venuti, 2004, p.29) and to “uncove[r] the domesticating movement involved in any foreignizing translation by showing where its construction of the foreign depends on domestic cultural materials” (Venuti, 2004, p.29). Foreignising and domesticating translation are here articulated as practices of

⁸⁶ Note that neither Damrosch nor Apter explicitly target foreignising translation. Nonetheless, their sense of the text as, variously, “primitive,” “decadent,” “radical[ly] othe[r]” or simply “differen[t]” presumes a foreignising translation. Consider that a domesticating translation tends to erase all signs of difference and render the source-language in the epistemology of the target-language. In so doing, domestication increases the ease with which we read the other, providing readers with an illusion of closeness. A foreignising translation, on the other hand, involves “deviating enough from native [the receiving culture’s] norms to stage an alien reading experience” (Venuti, 2004, p.20). Hence, a text, subject to foreignising translation, may invite interpretations of alterity, strangeness and difference, which themselves are open to negative affects.

reading. For Venuti, they are the necessary critical labour that responsible readers must undertake to mitigate – or *resist* – the irresponsibility and ethnocentrism of translation.

Venuti's advocacy of symptomatic reading poses two distinct issues. First, it reifies the notion of an original, more authentic text. There is a latent investment in the authority of the untranslated literary work, and an attendant delegitimisation of its readings and translations. Second, it presumes that the associated issues with domestication and foreignisation can only be mitigated by symptomatic reading, which is resultantly manifest as highly (self-)critical. Yet, symptomatic reading's superiority here depends on the conflation of foreignisation and domestication's *implied* readers with its *actual* readers. Both foreignisation and domestication may imply problematic reading approaches, but that is not to say that all readers are all the time blindly reproducing foreignisation and domestication. As Iser explains in *The Act of Reading*, "the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader" (1978, p.34). Venuti shows precisely that there is a difference between implied reading and actual reading in his deployment of symptomatic reading. And, like Venuti, readers have the agency to dispute or resist the literary work's horizon, including its translation and implied readings.

Implicit in Lawrence Venuti's articulation of symptomatic reading is nonetheless an important point. Not only is translation a form of reading, but reading is also a form of translation. Spivak explicitly describes reading as translation in 'The Politics of Translation' (1993, pp.197-200). There, she makes clear the different registers, histories and motivations that readers bring to texts from without. Drawing together Venuti's conception of foreignisation and domestication, and Spivak's articulation of reading as translation, I consider acts of foreignisation and domestication as intrinsic to reading. Specifically, foreignisation and domestication describe the spatial and epistemic activities

of the reading self and the self-in-the-world respectively. Let us remember that foreignisation “send[s] the reader abroad,” whilst domestication “bring[s] the author [and text] back home” (Venuti, 2004, p.20). These terms imply that readers participate in not necessarily linguistic, but spatial and cultural – and hence epistemic – transformations.⁸⁷ If we recall my model of reading, it becomes clear that the inverse translations/transformations of foreignisation and domestication are inseparable. During the time-flow of reading, the reading self is concerned with moving toward the text’s horizon. We can describe this as a foreignising movement insofar as the reader (via the reading self) is moving away from themselves and towards the text. The reading self becomes foreign to itself as self-in-the-world, forfeiting self-authority. As the reading self proceeds toward the spatial and epistemic formations of the text’s standpoint – and because the reading self and the self-in-the-world compose a single reader – it transports the self-in-the-world toward the text. As the reading self communicates the text’s singularity to the self-in-the-world (undertaking its foreignising work), the self-in-the-world processes the text via its existing spatial and epistemic horizon. It domesticates the text, moving it towards its existing horizon. Readers thus perform a simultaneously foreignising and domesticating movement, moving toward the text and bringing the text home. Hybridity is intrinsic to the act of reading. The interpretive labour of the reading self and the self-in-the-world can therefore be understood as foreignisation and domestication respectively.

My conceptualisation of foreignising and domesticating translation as the specific, interconnected interpretive gestures of the reading self and the self-in-the-world identifies ambivalences at the site of consumption. In so doing, it intervenes in contemporary translation studies debates about the risks of translation, foregrounding readers’ ability to

⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida famously describes translation as *transformation* (Derrida, 1981, p.20).

navigate as well as reproduce foreignisation and domestication. By dint of their composition as reading self and self-in-the-world, readers proceed through the text via an interpretive circuit of foreignisation and domestication. This means that readers do not purely incorporate the text into their episteme and assimilate its differences in a domesticating move, nor mobilise its perceived differences solely for the purpose of othering or the production of a national or ethnic logic of difference. The reading self may mitigate the self-in-the-world's domesticating translation by undertaking a foreignising counter-movement that recognises the text's singularity and so refuses to allow the self-in-the-world contact with the text. And the self-in-the-world may attenuate the reading self's foreignising movement by insisting on the text's inhabitation of the world and the political demand to position it vis-à-vis our reality. Lawrence Venuti's conceptualisation of foreignisation and domestication as wilful strategies of symptomatic reading is therefore counterintuitive and unnecessary. The kind of readerly self-reflexivity he wants to promote is intrinsic to the oscillation of our reading self and self-in-the-world. To quote Homi Bhabha:

Resistance [like symptomatic reading in Venuti's formulation] is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention [...] It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power-hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth. (Bhabha, 1985, p.153)

Bhabha is here talking about colonial discourse. He suggests that the possibility of anti-colonial resistance is located in the text itself because the text embeds ambivalence. We can extend the characteristic of ambivalence to literature more widely insofar as ambivalence generates hybrid readings. Literary texts command authority (in foreignising forms like the suspension of disbelief), but in so doing require that readers bring their

own horizon to bear on that authority (in domesticating acts that reconstitute the text from without).

The immanent hybridity of reading colonial discourse may offer opportunities for resistance, as Bhabha suggests. But when I use Bhabha's account of the hybridity of reading to develop our understanding of reading as foreignisation and domestication, I do not intend to imply a relationship between reading postcolonial literature and 'resistance'. The reciprocity of foreignisation and domestication in the moment of reading does not prevent readers from sometimes engaging in forms of othering and exoticism (associated with foreignisation), and investing in empathetic identifications that problematically conceal histories of oppression and contemporary global circuits of power (associated with domestication). My conceptualisation of reading as foreignisation and domestication makes clear precisely that even well-meaning professional postcolonial critics like myself may silently vest power in domesticating logics, even as we seek to empower local knowledge-systems and to read texts and ourselves through the optics of foreignisation. Graham Huggan's incisive critique of tourism and anti-tourist tourism helps us to comprehend the imbrication of domestication and foreignisation. By a domesticating logic of cultural equivalence, tourism "appeals to world peace and the need for intercultural understanding"; yet, it is invisibly inscribed with a foreignising impulse insofar as "[it] continues to feed off social, political and economic differences" (Huggan, 2001, p.177). Similarly, anti-tourist tourism "seeks privileged access to the real" through its distinctive foreignising manoeuvres (Huggan, 2001, p.198). Yet, because of its abiding exotic gaze, its latent domesticating production of other cultures, "[anti-tourist tourism] searches for an authenticity it prevents itself from finding, and for another time and place produced by its own self-justifying myths (Bongie 1991)" (Huggan, 2001, p.198). Like anti-tourist tourism, postcolonial critique's foreignising imperatives may harbour

retrograde domesticating impulses. My conceptualisation of reading as (foreignising and domesticating) translation therefore may not locate anti-colonial resistance at the site of consumption. But it does identify albeit ambivalent agency at the site of consumption – whereby readers may refute forms of othering and pernicious identification implied by texts, just as they may expose texts to different imperial logics, developed from without. This complicates existing theories of translation, which presume that readers’ responses are wholly determined by the kind of literary translation performed.

Using foreignisation and domestication to account for readers’ interpretive labour has a second advantage. It communicates the spatial dimensions of the act of reading in which we imaginatively traverse material and epistemic differences between ourselves and the texts we read. The spatial connotations of foreignisation and domestication are significant. The terms usefully convey the discontinuities between the ways in which readers and texts discursively produce space. In this sense, foreignisation may involve moving toward a different production of space, while domestication may see readers assimilate a radically different production of space within their existing worldly horizon. Reading may thus imply translations of the self and the world, through the language – the discourses – of the text. These translation gives rise to the potential of an ethics of self-reconstitution, and a politics of self-recognition. In order to comprehend this process, we need to better understand the relationship between language and space.

3.2. Language and the Spatial ‘Standard’

In its re-elaboration of translation as reading, the previous section exploited the linguistic and spatial connotations of translation. This section explores the relationship between language and space in more detail. Specifically, it rehearses Henri Lefebvre’s theory of

spatial production in order to highlight the influence of what I term the spatial ‘standard’ and its interactions with language and the language ‘standard’. Plotting the relationship between language and space upfront is important because, as we will see in later sections, the text’s reflections on linguistic translation inspire readers to reflect on and interrogate the production of space. The novel “succeeds in luring the western reader into an alien way of thinking” (Le Guin, 2007, np) because its linguistic translations have spatial and epistemic implications. The first-person narrator encounters and re-presents the space and inhabitants of London through non-‘standard’ English, and at times Chinese. The text’s focus on language, interlingual communication, and translation is therefore realised by forms of spatial translation which illuminate and scrutinise the social (re)production of space.

Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* offers us a lucid and influential account of the relationship between language and space. Lefebvre suggests that space is produced by language, by an interaction with language, and by use. To use his terms, spatial production takes place in *representations of space*, *spatial practice*, and *representational spaces*. Representations of space – or *conceptions of space* – are the domain of geographers, cartographers and scientists in the form of maps and urban planning for example. They “tend [...] towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). Representations of space are associated with state power, and are the dominant discourse through which contemporary capitalist societies think space (Lefebvre, 1991, p.8). They tell us, for example, that Blackfriars Bridge connects Blackfriars to Southwark; that Brick Lane market is 2.8 miles from Hackney by car, and the quickest way to get there is via the A107. They also tell us that there is indeed a quantifiable area that is Hackney and not elsewhere. Spatial practice – or *perceptions of space* – refers to the manner in which members of society inhabit space according to a

social code of permissions, designations, and prohibitions. According to spatial practice, a road is a route of travel and not a space to gather, and a structure may be transformed into a home through monetary exchange and/or habitual dwelling (though different cultures lend different degrees of social acceptance to these practices of home).⁸⁸ Spatial practice represents the assimilation of the connections between particular locations and different social formations; as such, it requires, and enables the demonstration of users' competence and belonging (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). Representational spaces, meanwhile, are the site of the *lived*. By contrast with representations of space, they “may be said [...] to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). And unlike spatial practice, representational spaces “need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness” and are “[r]edolent with imaginary and symbolic elements” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.41). Put another way, representational spaces are descriptive and not always practical. They are “the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39; original emphasis). Representational spaces, insofar as they may undermine norms of spatial practice and run counter to representations of space, can therefore be sites of resistance and re-production, in the sense of doing space otherwise. Notwithstanding, representational spaces like works of art and literature can be manipulated by representations of space (see Lefebvre, 1991, p.59). They may also behave like spatial practices and/or representations of space by reproducing extant social stratifications. For

⁸⁸ We must remain sensitive to different cultures' spatial practices. The process of colonisation illuminates different cultures' spatial practices, often witnessing the colonial group naturalise its perception of space in ways that threaten colonised and indigenous groups' claims to belonging. Consider, for example, the historic delegitimization of indigenous peoples' belonging to the land through the articulation of their nomadism. When the business of settlement is discourses from without as unfinished, colonisation is validated. Partly because of nomadism's contestation of territorial rights, and its premature celebration of what for some peoples materially amounts to exile, John Noyes (2006) asks postcolonialists to use the term advisedly.

example, and as John Noyes (1992) finds, colonial literature published around the fin de siècle contributed to the social organisation of space; its imperative to describe was simultaneously its ability to prescribe. Like maps produced during the colonial period, colonial writing also delineated spaces and their social relations (Noyes, 1992, p.105). Representational spaces are therefore ambivalent sources of spatial production, with different proximities to the dominant.

Representations of space and spatial practice, however, always have to do with power and its reproduction. Representations of space in fact enable, or control, spatial practice. For example, the perception of what takes place in a public park follows its being conceived of as a public park by town planners and architects (as well as government bodies). Representations of space distinguish between spaces and insinuate their uses, conferring urban, political and legal rights (see Harvey, 2003), and producing uneven economic development (see Massey, 1995). Onto these spaces conceptualised by representations of space, spatial practice projects different forms of social practice (Lefebvre, 1991, p.8), and thus implies identities, agencies and mobilities in space. In this way, perceptions of spaces are forms of policing. They delimit the realm of the possible and the proper: they “produc[e] [society’s space] slowly and surely as [they] maste[r] and appropriat[e] it” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38). Representations of space and spatial practice together produce a space that “necessarily embraces some things and excludes others; what it rejects may be relegated to nostalgia or it may be simply forbidden. Such a space asserts, negates and denies” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.99). Representations of space and spatial practice are therefore ideological regulatory mechanisms. Lefebvre explicitly describes representations of space as “part of the history of ideologies” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.116); given spatial practice’s dependence on representations of space, and its determination of belonging, we can also describe spatial practice as ideological.

From this awareness of their regulatory and ideological effects, we can say that representations of space and spatial practice conspire to produce and sustain a spatial ‘standard’ against which representational spaces, including users’ performances of space, are evaluated. In defining a spatial ‘standard’, I mean to evoke the (English) language ‘standard’, and to make connections between the project of a science of space and the project of a science of language. In so doing, I develop Michel de Certeau’s insight that “the geometrical space of urbanists and architects seems to have the status of the ‘proper meaning’ constructed by grammarians and linguistics in order to have a normal and normative level to which they can compare the drifting of ‘figurative’ language” (de Certeau, 1988, p.100). It is not that space resembles a language per se, but that their metalanguages share characteristics. In much the same way as there is a prestigious linguistic grammar, there is a prestigious spatial grammar that identifies and disparages variant or deviant forms. This is the spatial ‘standard’.

‘Standard’ English is amongst the most prestigious of English language varieties, and is used for writing, printing, and native and non-native speaker education (Trudgill, 1999, p.118). This remains the case even though “most native speakers of English in the world are native speakers of some non-standard variety of the language” (Trudgill, 1999, p.118).⁸⁹ We might better account for the language ‘standard’ as not a language but an effect of ideology: ‘standard’ English is “an idea in the mind rather than a reality—a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent” (Milroy and Milroy, 2002, p.19). The discursive construction of ‘standard’ English mobilises the meaning of ‘standard’ “as a marker and constructor of authority” (Crowley, 2003, p.77), “an exemplar of measure or weight” (Crowley, 2003, p.78) and “a single form of speech

⁸⁹ ‘Standard’ English is a system abstracted from actual speech, which itself exists within another, larger “theoretical construct” – the English language (Crowley, 1991, p.3; see also Reagan, 2004).

that will replace diversity and variation” (Crowley, 2003, p.107). In this way, ‘standard’ English simultaneously acts as an exemplar, assumes commonality, and aspires toward homogeneity. This language ‘standard’, precisely because it inspires and presumes linguistic uniformity, allows for the identification of linguistic variation as deviance, and the identification of those who speak a non-‘standard’ variety as deviant. As Crowley argues – informed by Raymond Williams’ claim that “‘a definition of language is always implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world’” – notions of a ‘standard’ or ‘proper’ form of language are simultaneously notions of a ‘standard’ or ‘proper’ person or community of people (Crowley, 1991, p.8). Evocations of the language ‘standard’ are “attempts to define who is to be included and who excluded, on what grounds, in what forms, within or without the prevailing social order”; they are “thinly veiled attempts to legitimate patterns of exclusion and hierarchy” (Crowley, 1991, pp.8-9).

Let us now use these descriptions of the (English) language ‘standard’ to define the spatial ‘standard.’

1. The spatial ‘standard’ is prestigious, though unactualised.
2. It is authoritative and confers authority.
3. It sets an example to practitioners of space.
4. As a system of centripetal rationalisation, it implores assimilation and at times erases local performances.
5. The spatial ‘standard’ implies that some persons and communities are ‘standard’ or ‘proper’; inversely, it determines others as ‘non-standard’ or ‘improper’.⁹⁰

It is not just that the language ‘standard’ and the spatial ‘standard’ share characteristics and motivations, but that they are inextricably linked. Language fluency is especially

⁹⁰ This understanding of spatial propriety clearly has implications for how we might produce *The Satanic Verses*’ *Proper* London. It is not implausible that Proper London should encourage some readers to conjure the site of the spatial ‘standard’. From an invocation of the spatial ‘standard’, readers might variously measure characters’ spatial performances against this ‘standard’. When characters thwart that spatial ‘standard’, some readers may recognise the embedded exclusions of the ‘standard’, and, through this recognition, even contest its legitimacy.

important for the reproduction of the spatial ‘standard’. The dominant mode of spatial production, representations of space, comprises a verbal system of signs (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). Spatial practice requires competence in, and a performance of this system (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). After all, “[m]aps will only get us lost if we know how to read them” (Bulson, 2007, p.131). In other words, the spatial ‘standard’ can only be reproduced by those fluent in the language particular to that ‘standard’.

In part because different societies have different (prestigious) languages, their representations of spaces and spatial practices produce space in different ways. As Lefebvre notes, “every society - and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept – [sic] produces a space, its own space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.31). He proceeds to reflect on how Latin script languages and the Chinese script (漢字) might represent space in divergent ways. Lefebvre notes that, by contrast with the way in which space and its social relations are conveyed by Latin scripts, the “Asiatic mode of production, its space, its towns, or the relationship it embodies between town and country” is “reputedly represented figuratively or ideographically by the Chinese characters” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.31-32). Lefebvre later admits he is “lacking adequate knowledge of the Orient” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.42); he betrays this ignorance in his willingness to uncritically evoke an ‘Asiatic mode of production’,⁹¹ and in his reproduction of the claim that Chinese is figurative or ideographic.⁹² The dissimilar ways in which linguistic systems produce space is far more

⁹¹ The term ‘Asiatic mode of production’ is first used by Karl Marx in the 1850s. Lefebvre here appears to be developing Marx’s argument in the *Grundrisse* that, unlike the history of classical antiquity, “Asiatic history is a kind of indifferent unity of town and countryside” (Marx, 1973, p.479). Marxist and non-Marxist critics alike have contested the term, arguing that it uncritically reproduces orientalist thought – such as Hegel’s spatial division of the world (Said, 1993; Brook, 2016) – instead of originating with a rigorous analysis of social relations (Hindess and Hirst, 1975).

⁹² Jacques Derrida (1997) reproduces this prejudice in *Of Grammatology* by insisting that Chinese cannot be logocentric because it is pictographic (for a brief critique of this tendency, see Spivak, 1997, lxxxii; see also Meighoo, 2008). In reality, “most Chinese characters are of the semantic-phonetic (SP) type, [and only] some are concrete pictographs, abstract pictographs, or combinations of pictographs” (Wenzel, 2007, p.302). The majority of characters comprise a semantic component (or *radical*) on the left-hand side, and a

complex than Lefebvre is capable of imagining – not least because all languages have words which pertain to historical or idiomatic usages and, as such, which elicit alternative sites of articulation and alternative meanings at the same time as they mean in the present.⁹³

Lefebvre's ignorance of China and Chinese writing aside, his recognition of the relationship between spatial (re)production and fluency in a particular linguistic code is important. Language fluency can be seen as one of the conditions of assimilating and reproducing the spatial 'standard'. To deploy Bhabha's description of reading colonial discourse, linguistic competence is one of the "the rules of recognition" for the assimilation of the "transparency" of the spatial 'standard' and the space it produces (see Bhabha, 1985, p.152). This is because the spatial 'standard' is made up of signs (in representations of space) and of uses and combinations of those signs (in spatial practice). This being the case, we can infer that when a member or guest of a particular society does not possess speaking or writing proficiency in that society's language, they are likely to find the assimilation of the spatial 'standard' difficult. But their non-understanding of a given language and potential non-assimilation of the spatial 'standard' may also function as a form of resistance. Non-fluency in the language of the spatial 'standard' might inspire spatial performances that reveal and so interrogate the spatial 'standard' and the space it produces.

phonetic component on the right-hand side. Further, the relationship between the radical and the referent or field of meaning may be arbitrary (Wenzel, 2007, p.302).

⁹³ A number of scholars have considered the impossibility of translation given that referents are associated with different semantic fields as well as cultural practices. See Roman Jakobson on 'cheese' and 'сыр' (1959, p.232-233). See Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Task of the Translator' (2002) on 'Brot' and 'pain'. See also Susan Bassnett on 'pain' and 'bread' (2004, p.71). The protagonist of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* also identifies grammatical and semantic discontinuities between the English and Chinese signifiers for 'love' and '爱': whereas the English 'love' can be inflected by tense, the Chinese '爱' "has no tense [...and] means a being, a situation, a circumstance" (301). This is because Chinese tense-work is not morphological.

Language fluency is essential for individuals' reproduction of the spatial 'standard', and their achievement of belonging. But the language 'standard' itself also has a significant role in the perpetuation of the spatial 'standard' and its stratification of society. The (English) language 'standard' confers identity and belonging in a given community (see Crowley 1991, pp.8-9). For example, speakers are racialised according to their proximity to the (English) language 'standard': "*language possession is translated into and receives its value as skin color*" (Chow, 2014, p.3; original emphasis; see also Hill, 1998). Speaking in 'standard' and non-'standard' ways does not just racialise a subject, but may also see them gain or be denied national and religious associations (see Alim and Smitherman, 2012, p.23).⁹⁴ The extent to which the English language 'standard' mediates understandings and uses of space, as well as notions of who belongs, is particularly relevant in this chapter because the protagonist of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* uses dictionaries (embodiments of the language 'standard') to cognitively and physically navigate London, and indeed because in the process she creates her own vernacular diary-dictionary.

In summary, language and space are thoroughly imbricated. Representations of space and spatial practice – or, together, the spatial 'standard' – exist through language. Practitioners of space must be fluent in the language of the spatial 'standard' in a given society in order to perpetuate the spatial 'standard' and achieve belonging. Proximity to the language 'standard' is furthermore key to subjects' belonging in space because it indexes social characteristics such as race, class, ethnicity, nationality and religious affiliation. An awareness of the role of language fluency and of the language 'standard'

⁹⁴ It is important to note the Alim and Smitherman are working in a more descriptive linguistic tradition than Chow, Hill or Crowley. As a result, they tend to take for granted that certain varieties of English are historically and intrinsically black, white, Christian or American rather than discourses as such. Put another way, Alim and Smitherman are interested in "*linguaging race*" (2012, p.3), whereas the others (Chow most explicitly) work from an inverse proposition that language racialises, or more broadly that language produces identities.

in the production of space and subjects in space is especially pertinent to our reading of the novel at hand because we have a first-person narrator who is non-fluent in English, and who we may then conject at times contravenes the spatial ‘standard.’

To briefly draw together the propositions of the first and second sections, reading is characterised by acts of foreignisation and domestication. These interpretive translations are motivated in part by the extent to which texts conceive, perceive and ‘live’ space differently than readers. The production of space is predominated by representations of space like maps and urban planning. Together with spatial practice, they conspire to produce a set of norms – the spatial ‘standard’ – the assimilation of which is dependent upon language fluency and at times the reproduction of the language ‘standard.’ The reading self’s foreignising translations are tied to the singularity and peculiarity of texts’ spatial production, whilst the self-in-the-world’s domesticating translations are connected to the ways in which texts nonetheless evoke our preexisting notions of and interactions with space – including our awareness of a spatial ‘standard’. Just as the reading self and the self-in-the-world exist in dialectical tension, these foreignising and domesticating activities operate dialectically because a sense of singularity depends upon a sense of what is worldly or typical, and because a sense of what is worldly or typical is conditioned by a notion of that which might exceed comprehension and experience (see the second section of Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of the immanent hybridity of textualism and materialism). Invariably, readers produce space differently. Each self-in-the-world domesticates texts in idiosyncratic ways that are, amongst other things, particular to their engagement with representations of space, spatial practice, and representational spaces; each reading self, as determined by a dialectical relationship with the self-in-the-world, foreignises texts in equally particular ways. The conjoined interpretive acts of foreignisation and domestication make it possible

for readers to register the politics of space, and to participate ethically in different productions of space.

3.3. A Foreignising and Domesticating Structure

We now have a working theory of how readers translate the production of space. The following two sections draw on professional and non-professional readings of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* in order to register the diverse ways in which readers participate in this process of translation. This section in particular is interested in how the narrative's organising structures encourage readers to undertake foreignising and domesticating moves. It suggests that the text's hybrid form as a diary and a dictionary solicits hybrid readings which make visible and dispute the spatial 'standard' – particularly its construction of identities, agencies and mobilities in space.

In the spirit of actual reading, let us begin at the beginning.⁹⁵ Like its hypotext, Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* (2002 [1978]), *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* utilises a monological voice, and creatively combines the distinct forms and contents of a diary and a dictionary (Oboe, 2013, p.269).⁹⁶ Paratextual devices first suggest that we read that text as a diary. The text starts with a prologue that we later find out is a reiteration of a conversation between Z and her lover (see 239). The prologue is followed by the word 'Before' in large bold type and, adjacent, the handwritten sentence 'Sorry of my English', after which the first episode 'prologue' begins. The

⁹⁵ Because of our interest in readers' translation of the narrative's production of space, I have elected not to begin with the book cover, which admittedly might be a more accurate starting-point for most readers. However, it is worth briefly noting here that the novel has been published under several different covers, and that readers have widely differing views of the 2008 Vintage edition's cover especially. G123 contends that the cover, insofar as it comprises "[a] red backdrop, scattered with sundry green leaves surrounding an exotic, faceless and naked Oriental woman [...]" captures the mood of the book really well." G98 disagrees, stating in their review that "[w]hoever designed this cover should have his license revoked. Seriously."

⁹⁶ In an interview for *Medium*, Guo admitted that Barthes influenced her writing of the novel (see Guo, 2017).

following page is marked ‘February’ in large bold type. Together with the initial temporal marker ‘Before’, this paratextual deixis indicates that we ought to read the text as a diary. It establishes narratological conventions such as chronology, and social conventions such as singularity and intimacy.⁹⁷ The text’s apparent singularity encourages readers to appreciate that the narrative lies beyond their experiential and epistemic horizons, and therefore to perform a foreignising response through which they are able to temporarily prevent the intrusion of their epistemes. This remains the case even though the recognition of the text as a diary is dependent on the participation of the self-in-the-world and a domestication of the novel’s formal devices as diary-esque. Just as textualism always implies materialism, so too is foreignisation always mediated by domestication.

In stark contradiction with these immediate paratexts and their implication that we are reading a diary, the text subsequently deploys paratextual strategies associated with the form of the dictionary. Episodes tend to be named after a target word or phrase that Z has encountered and which she learns over the course of the chapter.⁹⁸ After the episode title, there follows a definition and ancillary information. In this sense, the first episode ‘alien’ provides the stylistic model for the large majority of those that follow. It is prefaced with the word class and the meaning of ‘alien’: “**alien** adj foreign; repugnant (to); from another world n foreigner; being from another world” (9; original emphasis).⁹⁹

⁹⁷ The text also appends Chinese passages and adjacent translations, carried out by the ‘Editor’ (see pp. 180-181 and pp.195-196). A76 has reported that “the Mandarin translations littered throughout the book [...also] gave the novel an authentic feel of a diary.”

⁹⁸ Exceptions include: ‘prologue’, whose name is derived from its location at the beginning of the book; ‘full English breakfast’, which features a small menu instead of a definition; all chapters concerned with tenses, which provide prose-form information on meaning and conjugation, and ‘Schengen space’, which is immediately preceded by the explanation provided by a leaflet which the lover is handling (197). In addition, no definition is provided for the each of the chapters named after the European cities that Z visits during September.

⁹⁹ The 2008 US edition of the novel, published by Anchor Books, numbers the definitions and also includes the pronunciation of the target word in the International Phonemic Alphabet: for example, “‘bætʃ.əl.ə” (‘bachelor’). Interestingly, and as can be observed in this example, the standard pronunciation given is General American not ‘standard’ English in what could be described as a domesticating literary translation of the novel.

The definitions provided for ‘alien’ are likely to be experienced as familiar insofar as they cohere with our expectations of what meanings a dictionary would provide. Further, their elliptical form and the multiple typefaces in which they appear are consistent with the dictionary form. Word classes are abbreviated, and meanings omit active verbs. In addition, alien appears in bold, word class is written in a sans-serif font, and the definitions themselves appear in the same serif font as the narrative. These stylistic conventions, insofar as they conjure (the site of) the English language ‘standard’, and are thus familiar, encourage readers to domesticate the text by way of their existing spatial and epistemic horizon. The frequency with which Goodreads and Amazon users describe the text as a part-dictionary or as including dictionary definitions in their reviews of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* would suggest that the episode prefaces are highly successful in procuring the engagement of readers’ self-in-the-world, whether by way of their formal layout and/or the worldliness of appended definitions. Again, the text’s solicitation of the self-in-the-world is the case notwithstanding that it is the reading self that first encounters these paratextual conventions and considers their singularity in the context of the narrative.

The first episode therefore prepares us for the text’s containment of antagonistic paratextual devices, which simultaneously indicate to us that we are reading a diary and a dictionary. *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*’ generic hybridity elicits simultaneously foreignising and domesticating responses. This means that readers may be primed to actualise – or bring ‘home’ – the singular and vernacular view of the world supplied by Z. It also means that they may be moved to textualise – send ‘abroad’ or denaturalise – their preexisting notions of the world, as derived through language (here embodied by the dictionary-esque definitions). Put another way, because the text situates a diary within a dictionary, readers may be moved to question the authority and objectivity

of language's representations of the world; because the text relocates a dictionary within a diary, readers may affectively disposed to authorise and validate the diary, recontextualising it within the world. In short, the text's generic hybridity may inspire a sensitivity for its discursive hybridity.

If we look at the episode 'alien' in greater detail, we can chart how the text's structural hybridity, which elicits interpretive hybridity, develops as discontinuities in narrative and point-of-view which in turn prolong hybridised readings. The dictionary form that prefaces the episode contains linguistic, spatial and epistemic information with which readers may domesticate the text and its protagonist by way of the self-in-the-world. 'Alien' acquires particular spatial referents and epistemic coordinates through its being written in English. Invariably, it is not an English alien (by language or nationality) that we imaginatively project in the text. Indeed, the term 'alien' furnishes certain oppositional accounts of discursive identity-formation and mobility. 'Alien' functions as a representation of space insofar as it instantiates hierarchical relations of spatial production. It designates one who is out-of-place and therefore simultaneously demarcates an in-place of belonging from which aliens (however defined) are excluded. And in marking one as out-of-place, 'alien' limits a person's ability to produce space. Given that the 'prologue' narrates Z's arrival to London from Beijing in non-'standard' English, readers may assume that the referent of 'alien' is Z. Indeed, they may use the definitions provided to domesticate the protagonist as (an) alien. This involves othering the protagonist and the narrative more broadly with recourse to the spatial 'standard', particularly its interpretation of identity and mobility. By contrast with the dictionary's account of 'alien', the diary entry is linguistically, spatially and epistemically singular. It makes sustained use of non-'standard' English, which readers may conject mirrors the protagonist's non-fluency in English. Coupled with the episode's first-person description

of an anxious arrival in London, this non-‘standard’ language use prefigures the city and the broader nation-state as an alien space. This is clear in the following excerpt: “‘Heathlow Airport’. Every single name difficult remembering, because not just ‘London Airport’ simple way like we simple way call ‘Beijing Airport’” (9). The protagonist-narrator filters the spatial and epistemic horizon instantiated by the dictionary definitions through an epistemic vantage point (“we”) from without.

In one sense, Z’s non-‘standard’ pronunciation of Heathrow – as ‘Heathlow’ – may be said to impress the label of ‘alien’ upon her. A lack of linguistic fluency can here be seen to withhold from the space-user Z access to (the reproduction of) the spatial ‘standard’; and so “[e]verything [remains] very confuse way here [in the airport]” (9). The protagonist is unfamiliar with the verbal system of spatial representation that governs the reality of the airport – here, signs, places names, and other forms of topography. This may encourage the reading self to return to the self-in-the-world, at which point the self-in-the-world may domesticate the text’s space by way of Heathrow and may domesticate Z’s identity by way of the dictionary definition of ‘alien’, meaning foreign or from another world. Of course, within the parameters of this interpretive domestication, there are numerous possible approaches. For example, and to crudely oversimplify for exemplary purposes, it is entirely possible for readers to find Z’s non-‘standard’ English funny (as G229 does), to feel that it typifies Chinese ‘learner’s English’ (as Gilmour, 2012, p.218 does), or to find it offensive (as G317 does),¹⁰⁰ or annoying or inauthentic (see Cadwalladr, 2007, and A51 and G62’s reviews). (Note here that to find the protagonist’s language-use inauthentic is still a domesticating move insofar as it involves

¹⁰⁰ Note also that G317 defends ‘standard’ English in the following excerpts: “(In my immigrant-raised habit of taking what is said and written with entire seriousness and my snobbery about proper grammar and pronunciation, I was initially offended by the author’s choice to write in this broken voice, but then I saw that it couldn’t have been otherwise and, really, would have been false if written correctly.)”

readers relating her linguistic performance to their knowledge or experience of the actual linguistic performances of Chinese second-language speakers). Likewise, readers may relate the narrative of Z's arrival in London to prior ideas and experiences relating to migration, as conceptualised through the spatial 'standard'. This may involve the invocation of a 'good'/'bad' migrant paradigm through which readers evaluate the legitimacy of her migration. But it may also see readers empathise with her sense of alienation. Crucially, readers need not have shared Z's experience as a Chinese woman arriving in Britain for the first time to identify with or as her. Empathy or identification depends not on a shared setting, actors or events, but on the mutuality of "a similar feeling substrate" (Kuiken, Miall and Sikora, 2004, p.176). Thus, G86 suggests that *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* is "a story that will strike a lot of powerful (and sometimes painful) chords among anyone who has done any amount of international traveling themselves." G86 similarly states: "I completely identified with this book because it brilliantly captures the feeling of immersing oneself in a foreign language and culture. What happens when you begin to fluently speak, live and love in another language is fascinating." These readers mediate Z's experience of migration by way of their own affective histories of travel, language-learning and cultural immersion, self-narrated through notions of belonging and mobility in part produced by the spatial 'standard'. We can therefore observe the way in which the episode's preceding dictionary definitions shape readers' responses to Z's particular production of the airport, endorsing different forms of domestication through which we draw on the spatial 'standard' in order to realise the protagonist-narrator as alien (even if we share or have shared feelings of alienation).

Though the dictionary's framing of Z's non-fluency in English and non-familiarity with the London airport may solicit these domesticating responses inflected

by the spatial 'standard', it may at the same time opportune foreignising responses which contest the authority of the spatial 'standard'. For example, by articulating 'Heathrow' as 'Heathlow', Z may implicitly move readers to question the validity of the sign, and to pay attention to the role of language in producing the airport's existence. That is to say, 'Heathlow' may invite the self-in-the-world to domesticate her production of space by way of 'Heathrow', but it also seems to demand that the reading self suspends reality and extant representations of London. In other words, it is not simply that "Heathrow airport is Heathlow airport", as Carole Cadwalladr (2007) flippantly suggests in her negative review of the book. The non-'standard' spelling, which is often experienced as reflective of Z's non-'standard' English, subtly alters the sign and hence changes the referent. 'Heathlow' originates with a different vantage point than the spatial 'standard', even as it evokes the spatial 'standard' and its determination of Heathrow. The simultaneity of readers' foreignising and domesticating movements here means that the self-in-the-world might not merely co-opt the text's production of space and make it align with its own. The self-in-the-world might instead return to itself with a new knowledge of the arbitrariness of the sign 'Heathrow' as well as how its professed descriptive efficacy belies its proclivity to prescribe. It may learn therefore that its grip on reality is partial and founded on imaginative systems of spatial production. The reading self, likewise, might not process 'Heathlow' as if it is purely foreign or textual; it may instead appreciate its location in reality. Thus, in both ways, it may become difficult for readers to identify Z as an alien; she alienates the self-in-the-world from its own horizon, and she resists the reading self's designation of her narrative as textual or imaginary (and therefore foreign or alien). In practice, these hybridised readings may elicit a variety of affects depending on how readers' acts of domestication interact with their acts of foreignisation; however, there is the potential to be moved toward political recognition (perhaps along the lines of

“I recognise now the existence of a spatial ‘standard’ that polices and excludes certain identities and mobilities, including that which I thought to be ‘alien’”) and ethical self-reflexivity (for example, “I didn’t realise my propensity to invoke the spatial ‘standard’ when thinking about space, nor the extent to which I might as such intervene in the reproduction of the spatial ‘standard’”).

The protagonist-narrator’s acquisition of the word ‘alien’ prolongs this foreignising-domesticating reading experience. At the airport, she is confronted by passport security. Passengers separate into two lines:

Sign in front of queue say ALIEN and NON ALIEN.
I am alien, like Hollywood film *Alien*, I live in another planet, with
funny looking and strange language. [...] I feel little criminal but I
doing nothing wrong so far. (9)

Z has yet to begin using the *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* in order to navigate London. As a result of the protagonist’s non-fluency with English, her way of making meaning is different from the dictionary’s methodology and from the self-in-the-world, which is initially encouraged to assimilate the dictionary’s methodology and its implied epistemology. Z creatively pools epistemic and experiential resources in order to develop her comprehension of the scenario she faces. Her use of ‘alien’ in the above passage mobilises several meanings at once, severally denoting the legal term for a non-citizen, as per the airport signs; a (notably fictional) extra-terrestrial being; a foreigner; and an aberration.

Z’s innovative way of making ‘alien’ meaningful necessitates domestication insofar as it evokes standardised definitions and a highly pervasive cultural representation of an alien. But it also invites foreignisation because it thwarts dictionary conventions by synthesising incompatible meanings. She is interpellated as a legal alien, only to self-identify as an alien from “another planet” akin to that of the 1979 blockbuster film,

directed by Ridley Scott and starring Sigourney Weaver. This passage, then, solicits foreignising and domesticating responses capable of imaginatively combining extant meanings of ‘alien’ as a non-citizen and as not-of-this-world. We are being asked to co-design connections between the creative discursive production of nonhuman lifeforms and the legal designation of aliens. The reading self and the self-in-the-world together process how, as a Chinese woman, Z is received in Britain as if from another world. They co-process how her status as a legal alien fictionalises her and discursively produce her as not just culturally and linguistically different, but other: she comes to possess a “funny looking and strange language” (9). Moreover, readers are tutored to recognise the way in which the coordination of legal discourses and cultural prejudices infiltrates Z’s own self-identity such that, in London, she not only reads as, but “feel[s] little criminal,” despite “doing nothing wrong so far” (9). This may sound like a highly sophisticated or challenging reading, but this kind of composite reading is widely evidenced in non-professional responses to the text recorded online. Additionally, it is clear that such readings elicit humour at the same time as they precipitate an imaginative rethinking of the significance of ‘alien’. For example, A41 writes in their review: “I found [the ‘alien’ episode] funny because I nearly had the same thoughts about that word alien when I was pretty young and flying over to England for the first time.” A41 clearly identifies with Z’s creative conceptualisation of alien. It triggers a memory of real travel, which A41 projects into the text in a politicisation of the ethics of reading. Put simply, A41 and the text mutually vindicate one another’s re-presentation of reality as bodily and perceptually authentic.

If readers recognise that the narrator is courting preexisting prejudices about migrants here (such as their strangeness and illegality as well as their essential incompatibility with host cultures), then they may also be affected to resist designating

her as alien at all by way of either foreignisation or domestication. To recall earlier critiques of domestication and foreignisation, readers may be guided away from the “neocolonialist construction” of the other, associated with domestication (Spivak, 1993, p.181), and the foreignising interpretation of Z as “an image of radical otherness against which the home tradition can be more clearly defined” (Damrosch, 2003, p.14). Because the protagonist anticipates perceptions of her as alien via the spatial ‘standard’, she also intercepts them. She turns the self-in-the-world back on itself and encourages it to self-reflectively critique the way in which its comprehension of legal aliens involves an imaginative discursive production of their embodiment. This means that the domestication of Z as an alien may be unsuccessful. Her reference to the film *Alien* likewise disputes her self-professed alienhood, and therefore hampers foreignising interpretations of her. Z’s knowledge of *Alien* demonstrates that she not only inhabits the world, but also shares global commodity culture and a cultural repertoire with implied readers (i.e. those readers that the text’s dictionary definitions both appeal to and create). Z’s self-identification as an alien therefore seems to invite a hybrid response that thwarts pernicious forms of interpretive translation, and which may even empower readers to diagnose the symbolic violence of foreignisation and domestication. Specifically, readers may allow themselves to be challenged to rethink the transparency of the term ‘alien’ as it is determined by the spatial ‘standard’ in conversation with historically- and culturally-specific prejudices (because Z does not wholly fulfil the requirements of an alien in the terms she sets out), and therefore to interrogate the veracity of the ‘standard’ more broadly.

At the end of ‘alien’, readers may recognise that Z reproduces dominant discourses relating to a cultural and political divide between the United Kingdom and the People’s Republic of China. She asserts: “Because legal foreigner from Communism

region, I must re-educate, must match this capitalism freedom and Western democracy” (10). Section Four considers the notion of “re-education” in light of the protagonist’s later discussion of Maoist labour camps (see pg. 217). For now, the important thing is that, for the task of “re-education”, Z enlists the bilingual dictionary: “From now on, I go with *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* at all times. [...] Dictionary is most important thing from China. *Concise* meaning simple and clean” (10). In perceiving that the bilingual dictionary will enable her to assimilate the economic, political and sociocultural specificities of London, the protagonist makes clear the relationship between the language ‘standard’ on one hand, and the spatial ‘standard’ and its associated cultural norms and epistemic specificities on the other. But the definition she provides of ‘concise’ is misleading; it omits that concision involves accuracy and comprehensiveness. In Z’s interaction with the bilingual dictionary, then, we witness that “[t]he discovery [which is to say, the reading] of the book is, at once, a moment of originality and authority, as well as a process of displacement” (Bhabha, 1985, p.144). She invokes the authority of the dictionary at the same time as she displaces its authority through reading.

The intrusion of the *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* and Z’s engagement with it is significant for our translation of the production of space. If we domesticate Z’s use of the dictionary as inappropriate and note that she misapprehends the meaning of the word ‘concise’, we may be moved to question the felicity of the text more widely. Titled *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, the novel may well embed Z’s own ‘misunderstanding’ of ‘concise’ and therefore be neither concise nor aligned with the language ‘standard’. On this basis, we may extrapolate that it will have difficulties assimilating the spatial ‘standard’ or, in other words, that the novel may be linguistically and spatially disruptive and corrupted. Or, we may deduce that the brevity of this definition of ‘concise’ is the consequence of Z’s consultation of the bilingual *Concise*

Chinese-English Dictionary, rather than a monolingual dictionary that might offer more detailed explanations of words as well as synonyms, word class and in context usage examples. This short passage may introduce doubt about the (bi)lingual dictionary – especially its ability to proffer Z with the opportunity to assimilate the relevant language and spatial ‘standards’ – because it generates a gap between what the self-in-the-world has incorporated as the ‘standard’ and Z’s perception of the ‘standard’, with which the reading self aligns. Moreover, this gap may engender an affective relay between the reading self and the self-in-the-world, through which readers are primed to appreciate the discontinuities between the dictionary and social/spatial life, and how these discontinuities might originate at the site of reading. In short, readers may be moved to make connections between language and space.

A later episode, titled ‘properly’, both confirms the relationship between language and space, and draws attention to the ways in which language is necessarily cultural and conventional rather than referential. ‘Properly’ makes explicit the shortcomings of the bilingual dictionary for interpreting uses of language. But it also solicits a critique of the relationships between the language ‘standard’ more broadly (and as embodied by the dictionary), the spatial ‘standard’, and social life. This is because, in the episode, the interception of the language ‘standard’ and its relationship to linguistic practice takes place within a spatial economy. We are encouraged to perceive the protagonist as unable to reproduce the spatial ‘standard’ not because she has not assimilated the English language ‘standard’, but because the practical uses of the spatial ‘standard’ by space-users exceed the language ‘standard’ and are instead based in linguistic conventionalism.

In the episode, Z takes a taxi for the first time because she cannot comprehend either the map of the London underground or the bus timetables. She tells us: “Tube map is like plate of noodles. Bus route is in-understandable” (19). Z disputes the

representational efficacy of both the iconic map of the London Underground rail network and a map of the bus network.¹⁰¹ By referring to these worldly phenomena in this representational way, the protagonist may encourage readers to denaturalise the relationship between the map and the territory – in translation terms, to domesticate the maps as actually-existing and to foreignise them as inimical imaginings of the spaces they claim to represent. However, readers may re-domesticate these complex affects by way of the spatial ‘standard’ as indexical of her identity as a non-British migrant or a non-Londoner. Subsequent narrative action stimulates further hybrid responses, related not just to the spatial ‘standard’ (here manifest by maps) and space, but to the spatial ‘standard’, the language ‘standard’ and performances of space. On entering the taxi, the protagonist has an altercation with the driver because she fails to perform the spatial ‘standard’ of closing the car door behind her. I describe closing the car door as a part of spatial ‘standard’ here insofar as it is as a form of spatial practice which allows the taxi driver to resume his labour and, in so doing, to reproduce a particular kind of representation of space, intimately linked to the capitalist mode of production, within which there are not just roads, but monetised routes and destinations. Z narrates the interaction as follows:

Driver say: ‘Please shut the door properly!’
 I already shut the door, but taxi don’t moving.
 Driver shout me again: ‘Shut the door properly!’ in a *concisely* manner.
 I am bit scared. I not understanding what is this ‘properly’.
 ‘I beg your pardon?’ I ask. ‘What is *properly*?’
 ‘Shut the door properly!’ Taxi drivers turns around his big head and neck nearly break because of anger.
 ‘But what is “properly”, Sir?’ I so frightened that I no daring ask it once more again.
 Driver coming out from taxi, and walking to door. I think he going to kill me.
 He opens door again, smashing it back to me hardly.
 ‘Properly!’ he shout. (19-20)

¹⁰¹ The map of the London Underground rail network may be one of the most iconic representations of space, but it is also one of the most obviously abstract (see Pike, 2002, p.101).

The protagonist's ignorance of the meaning of the word 'properly' appears to prevent her from practising space in a 'standard' way – much to the annoyance of the taxi driver who demands the enactment of the spatial 'standard'. The driver's instruction – ““Shut the door properly!”” – does not help her to identify her transgression because he shouts too “concisely”. The appearance of 'concise' may here recall for readers Z's earlier definition of 'concise' as denoting that which is “simple and clean” (10). Z's description of the driver's command as too concise – too “simple and clean” – thus raises questions about her intended meaning. As Lesley Atherton (2019) asks in her online book review, “Does she therefore mean that the taxi driver gave her a clear request (that she did not understand) or that he gave her a terse or rude request[?]” Whatever we determine, the protagonist's usage of 'concise' here clearly solicits a domesticating response through which we determine the protagonist's language proficiency as insufficient or deviant by the language 'standard'. Importantly, Z's recitation of the intratextual bilingual dictionary fails to embody this 'standard', and so we ourselves are moved to invoke our sense of an extratextual 'standard'. This text is courting a response, whose affects we may find uncomfortable.

The taxi driver and Z's conversation similarly invites us to domesticate Z's particular spatial performance as 'improper' by way of the spatial 'standard', which is implied by the preceding dictionary definition and evoked by the taxi driver, and which is presented as self-obvious by both. Z explicitly connects language fluency with an ability to replicate the spatial 'standard' with the question ““What is *properly*?””. As such, we are encouraged to locate her spatial 'impropriety' within her linguistic 'impropriety'. This involves domesticating her narrated performance as deviant according to both the language and spatial 'standards'. This remains the case even though we must first foreignise her performance as singular, in order to domesticate it as different or other.

Moreover, though the text solicits domestication, some readers may defy this implied readerly orientation; this resistance may be conscious among readers who are critical or self-conscious of the specific effects of invoking ‘standards’ here, or unconscious among readers who are ignorant of the standardised meaning of ‘proper’ and its specific meaning in this context. However, to focus on domestication as the most likely interpretive avenue, it is important to register the diverse proto-political interfaces through which readers may engage with Z’s ‘improper’ performance of space. This diversity is connected, albeit unpredictably, to readers’ material, epistemic and experiential differences. Readers may feel sympathetic toward Z. For example, G180 explains that “[f]or a former Londoner like myself, [Z’s narrative] gives a new insight into how the city must feel and look to the multitude of people who arrive from overseas for the first time, no matter the duration of their stay.” G180 explicitly links their sympathetic response to their comparatively more privileged knowledge and experience of London. Identifying themselves as “an American who came to Iceland”, G212 similarly sympathises with Z’s isolation and confusion on the basis that they share with the character an experience of migration and language-learning. Sympathy does not have to entail negative affects, and in fact might involve laughing with or at Z. Importantly, a domesticating reading may produce political interfaces that extend beyond readers and Z to readers and the text more broadly. For example, in their interactions with Z, readers may be politicised to reflect on the challenges faced by migrants, and subsequently to perceive the narrative as a (more) truthful account of migration. Certainly, G212 treats the text more broadly as a reliable witness of migrants’ experiences abroad. Conversely, readers may be politicised to resent the text’s misrepresentation of migration: G72 reports being transported outside the activity of reading when the protagonist’s language use becomes too “grating and gimmicky”. In addition, on the basis of Z’s interaction with the language and spatial

‘standards’ here, readers may simply anticipate ensuing narrative action and its precipitation of interpretive and affective translations.

While the initial conversation between the taxi driver and Z in ‘properly’ upholds the relationship between the language ‘standard’ and the spatial ‘standard’, thereby soliciting domesticating translations, the latter half of the episode complicates this relationship and demands foreignising readings. After her altercation with the taxi driver, Z goes to buy a monolingual English dictionary in order to discern the meaning of ‘properly’:

I go in bookshop and check ‘properly’ in *Collins English Dictionary* (‘THE AUTHORITY ON CURRENT ENGLISH’). *Properly* means ‘correct behaviour’. I think of my behaviour with the taxi driver ten minutes ago. Why incorrect? [...]
My small *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* not having ‘properly’ meaning. In China we never think of ‘correct behaviour’ because every behaviour correct. (20)

The protagonist localises ‘properly’ in Britain and an English-language episteme. In so doing, she signals the difficulty for those non-native to the United Kingdom and non-fluent in English to cohere with the spatial ‘standard’ of another society or, more specifically, another “mode of production, along with its specific relations of production” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.31). The English-language sign is said to be irrelevant in China for reasons that it does not pertain to any referent. Access to the monolingual dictionary does not make the spatial ‘standard’ available to Z because her conceptions and perceptions of space – let alone her lived performance of space – are inevitably different from that of the ‘standard’ in Britain. Indeed, her reading of the dictionary here challenges its authority and truthfulness. To engage Bhabha’s characterisation of the colonised’s reading of the Bible – “it is in between the edict of Englishness” issued by *Collins English Dictionary* (the self-professed “AUTHORITY ON CURRENT ENGLISH”) and “the assault” of Z’s “unruly” reading that “the colonial text [the English dictionary] emerges uncertainly”

(Bhabha, 1985, p.149). By identifying a gap between the spatial ‘standard’ that attends upon (and determines) London and that which governs China in the latter half of this episode, the narrator encourages us to revise our interpretation of the preceding conversation between herself and the taxi driver. The text calls for a foreignising response capable of denaturalising the transparency of the sign ‘properly’ and its associated ‘standard’ of spatial performance.

In this short excerpt, Z reproduces the definition of ‘properly’: “*Properly* means correct behaviour”. This may prompt readers to return to the dictionary definition that prefaces the chapter, and to re-establish the authority of the language and spatial ‘standards’. But her subsequent contextualisation of the dictionary definition insists on the foreignisation of these ‘standards’. She asks: “I think of my behaviour with the taxi driver ten minutes ago. Why incorrect?” We are tutored to revisit the earlier interaction and re-evaluate the self-obviousness of the taxi driver’s demand. The self-in-the-world is affected to interrogate the relationship between the spatial ‘standard’ (sometimes naturalised as space) and uses of space. The task of suspending disbelief in Z’s vantage point requires that readers deploy the reading self’s foreignising capabilities. Backtracking one material page – or ten textual minutes – we may find on that, upon a foreignising reading, the relationship between the spatial ‘standard’ and spatial performance is not at all transparent. It is difficult to derive from the prescribed meaning of ‘properly’ the specific behaviour that is “real or genuine; suited to a particular purpose; correct in behaviour; [or] excessively moral” when closing a taxi’s car door (19).¹⁰²

¹⁰² Z’s selection and inclusion of definitions, and the complex temporalities of their being appended, are central to the architecture of the text. In several episodes, as here, the protagonist narrates looking-up a definition in the dictionary. This definition prefaces the episode, and may be seen to have been retrospectively appended by Z. Notably, the prefacing definition is of the adjective ‘proper’ rather than the target word ‘properly’. It is possible that the inclusion of the definition of ‘proper’ has to do with the absence of ‘properly’ in the *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* she carries. However, and because Z quotes almost exactly the definition ‘correct behaviour’ provided by the *Collins English Dictionary* in the text, this definition is likely that of the *Collins* dictionary. As such, it appears that Z has applied the dictionary look-

Rey Chow's characterisation of the colonised's deconstructive encounter with the coloniser's language offers us a way of thinking about Z's engagement with the English sign 'properly'. Chow argues:

From the experience of language as a foreign object with which the colonized must wrestle in order to survive, the colonized is arguably more closely in touch with the reality of languaging as a type of prostheticization [...] Rather than being signs of inferiority, for instance, aphasia and double disfigurement can be conceptualized anew as forms of unveiling, as what expose the untenability of 'proper' (and proprietary) speech as such. (2014, p.14-15)

Chow suggests that, as non-native speakers in the language of the coloniser, colonised peoples possess a vantage point from which to challenge the authority of language – and language propriety especially – because they acutely experience language from without. Non-native speakers' inability to understand or speak a language, she goes on, enables them to reveal the discontinuities of language 'standards' and to generate an awareness of the ways in which such conceptions of language prescribe and proscribe identities, agencies and mobilities. To apply Chow's argument to our reading of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, what we have is a non-native speaker who, precisely by invoking the definition of 'properly', calls into question its authority and veracity. Moreover, because Z encounters 'properly' in a distinctly spatial economy, her probing of the relationship between the sign and its referent(s) is simultaneously an interrogation of its transparency and authority within the spatial 'standard'. In soliciting an awareness of the extent to which 'properly' is "a type of prostheticization" (Chow, 2014, p.14), the text also motivates us to appreciate 'properly' as a prosthesis in the larger project of prostheticization conducted by the spatial 'standard'. Indeed, there is an opportunity to

up strategy of *ignoring* which "complete[ly] neglect[s] [...] the ancillary information in an entry" such as word class (Thumb, 2002, p.123).

recognise that the spatial ‘standard’ inherits the “untenability” of abstracted system of the language ‘standard’ (Chow, 2014, p.15).

The episode ‘properly’ can therefore be said to formally and thematically court a domesticating response that naturalises the spatial ‘standard’, only to later solicit a foreignisation of the ‘standard’ and indeed those acts of domestication which render transparent the ‘standard’. In this oscillation of foreignisation and domestication, there are opportunities for readers to be affectively disposed toward ethical and political extension. We may gain a political sensitivity for the specific challenges faced by (Chinese) migrants in a non-natal spatio-linguistic domain. This is reflected by G70’s online review, in which they admit that early episodes “had me questioning and thinking about Chinese immigration” and “actually prompted me to go talk to my mum honestly about her experiences, [and] how much I admired her”. It is implied that G70’s mother is a Chinese migrant, and that reading the novel increased their interest and respect in their mother’s experience of migration as well as Chinese immigration more broadly. We may also be moved toward an ethical engagement with the artifice, foreignness, and imposition of the spatial ‘standard’ (i.e. its non-equivalence with space). We may recognise as political our access to the spatial ‘standard’ and the privileges it accords. And we may ethically commit to producing space otherwise than the spatial ‘standard’ given its delimitation of identities, agencies and mobilities. This is reflected by Ursula le Guin’s (2007) book review for *The Guardian*, in which she communicates that “[the novel] succeeds in luring the western reader into an alien way of thinking”.

The later episodes ‘guest’ and ‘misunderstanding’ prolong the divided interpretive labour of our reading experience. These two adjacent chapters animate readers to reproduce the authority of the spatial ‘standard’, and indeed to naturalise as space its regulated space which “necessarily embraces some things and excludes others”

(Lefebvre, 1991, p.99). But they also advocate a recognition of the specificity and inconsistency of the 'standard'. The first episode is prefaced by what is authenticated as a dictionary's account of the word 'guest': "**guest** n person entertained at another's house or at another's expense; invited performer or speaker; customer at a hotel or restaurant" (52). These definitions engage the self-in-the-world in the co-production of meaning, inviting readers to draw on their knowledge of the language 'standard' and, given the spatial connotations of 'guest', also the spatial 'standard'. The ensuing narrative, however, delays Z's acquisition of 'guest' in context, and so withholds a validation of the self-in-the-world's domesticating response. The protagonist retrospectively narrates a visit to Kew Gardens, albeit in the present tense with which she is more comfortable.¹⁰³ In direct speech, her past self renders Kew Gardens "'Queue Gardens'"; sensing the protagonist's confusion, the lover tells her to meet him at Richmond tube station, which he spells out for her benefit: "'R-i-c-h-m-o-n-d'" (52). As a brief aside, we might notice how, in much the same way as *The Satanic Verses*' configuration of London as *ellowen deeowen* serves to "linguistically unstitch the metropolis" (Groes, 2011, p.15), Z's deployment of 'Queue' in place of 'Kew' and the man's letter-by-letter spelling of Richmond simultaneously evokes the materiality of the city (that which is being negated) and renders its materiality textual. These idiosyncratic and imaginative toponyms can be seen to engender a doubled reading by way of the domestic sign and its foreignised counterpart. Nonetheless, retaining our focus on the episode of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary of Lovers* at hand, 'guest' proceeds to narrate the couple's visit to Kew Gardens and Z's frustration with its orientalist representation of Asia and its lack of sensitivity toward the specificity of China's flora.

¹⁰³ Z learns how to use progressive aspect verbs early on (see 40), but does not acquire the future tense until near the novel's end in an episode which thematises the uncertainty of the relationship's future (299). She only uses the past tense on the penultimate page, five hundred days after leaving England (see 353).

We have to wait until the final word of the episode for the arrival of the word ‘guest’: Z asks to see where her lover lives, and he replies sincerely, “‘Be my guest’” (53). This phrase may recruit readers’ self-in-the-world for the interpretation of its idiomatic meaning, ‘please do’. From such a domesticating move, readers may predict what will happen next, using their reading self to project those expectations into the imaginative horizon of the text: i.e. the next episode will narrate Z visiting the lover’s house. But there are alternative readings of “‘Be my guest’”. For instance, its dramatically elliptical location at the end of the episode might invite readers to recall previous episodes, this episode’s prefacing definitions (particularly the absence of a definition of the idiomatic usage of ‘guest’ in phrases such as this) and/or its implicit references to the protagonist’s Chinese nationality. On that basis, readers may enact a foreignising response through which they anticipate the relative opacity of the sign ‘guest’ for Z. These readers might offer different predictions for the next episode: i.e. it is likely to narrate, in a comic or farcical way, the protagonist misunderstanding the word ‘guest’ as intended, or fruitlessly checking its meaning in the dictionary. It is possible for readers to manage both these predictions at the same time – to enact a foreignising and domesticating reading of “‘Be my guest’” that invokes the spatial ‘standard’ and projects its reproduction in the text, and that negates the pertinence of the ‘standard’ and anticipates the protagonist’s singular method of actualising the invitation’s implicit demands.

The following episode ‘misunderstanding’ validates a doubled interpretive response in as much as it narrates Z’s misunderstanding of the lover’s invitation, “‘Be my guest’”, and therefore simultaneously evokes and negates the spatial ‘standard’. She tells us: “That’s how all start. From a misunderstanding. When you say ‘guest’ I think you meaning I can stay in your house. A week later, I move out from Chinese landlord” (54). Unlike the episode ‘properly’, it is not that the narrator has not acquired the word ‘guest’,

but that she has mobilised a meaning unintended by the lover. She moves into the man's house in Hackney despite having never received a genuine invitation from the host nor offered payment, and thus having failed to fulfil the terms of guesthood as determined by the spatial 'standard'. Now, Z's explicit admission of her "misunderstanding" reproduces the authority of the 'standard'. As such, it encourages the self-in-the-world to domesticate her spatial performance and so to determine it as deviant according to a (perhaps unconscious) notion of the spatial 'standard'. Because the previous episode overtly positions Z as Chinese, readers may connect this spatial deviance not just to a lack of language fluency, but to Z's nationality. In short, we are affected to agree with Z that she has "misunderstood" the lover's instruction in political responses that may entail a variety of dispositions, from sympathy to loathing.

However, attentive readers may notice that the definition of 'misunderstanding' appended at the beginning of the episode makes use of a word Z has only recently acquired and with limited success: "**misunderstand** v fail to understand *properly*" (54; emphasis added). Depending on their reading of 'properly' – specifically, whether they performed a hybridised reading that recognised the opacity of 'properly' – readers may deem the word's appearance here significant and may anticipate the text's subsequent contestation of a reading of Z's 'improper' comportment via the spatial 'standard'. Indeed, the episode 'misunderstanding' later intercepts a domesticating reading that, broadly considered, would determine the protagonist's behaviour as 'improper' and threaten her belonging in the space consecrated as London, England. The protagonist relays her final conversation with the Cantonese-speaking Chinese couple with whom she has been lodging in which she asks why they have not planted their garden. She finds the wife's response unsatisfactory, contradicting her claim that there is not enough sunlight in England to grow plants easily. Then:

We leave house behind. The couple is waving hands to me.
I say: 'Chinese strange sometimes.'
You smile: 'I don't know you Chinese at all. But I would like to get
to know you.' (55)

The narrator here aligns herself with the previously-solicited domesticating response that questions her belonging by dint of her language fluency and nationality: “‘Chinese strange sometimes’”. The physical position of Z and her lover together in the van, driving away from the Chinese couple complement the logic of her utterance here, coming to embody the spatial, cultural and linguistic gap that is created by a domesticating reading. The protagonist’s attunement with readers’ interpretations insofar as it surprises and frustrates domestications of her as strange – an object of humour, ridicule or sympathy – incites a foreignising response capable of reading her difference from without the spatial ‘standard’ and its attendant prejudices. Her subsequent reproduction of some of these prejudices in speaking about Hackney – her equation of a “rough” area with “[l]ots of black kids shouting outside” and “[b]eggars sitting on corner with dogs, smoking, and murmuring” (55) – can be seen to pursue a similarly composite reading. It courts domesticating responses that are aware of (or sympathetic to) prejudices about young black people and homeless people. But at the same time it solicits foreignising readings that, through Z’s idiosyncratic voice, see anew the imaginative work required to collocate black and homeless people and to make them symptomatic of “rough” areas, especially given their reportedly non-hostile behaviour – shouting, sitting, smoking, and murmuring.

In summary, a foreignising and domesticating response here provides us with the opportunity to regard with new political sensitivity the delimitation of identity in space (to reflect upon the way in which Z as Chinese woman experiences non-belonging in London), and to pay ethical attention to the imaginative leaps required to maintain that space of prejudices – which is to say, the spatial ‘standard’ (as unveiled by the reading

self's moving toward the vantage point of the text). Insofar as these affects of reading see readers reflect ethically and politically on their relationship with Z, they may also increase our hostility toward 'you' who "do[esn't] know you Chinese at all" but who "would like to get to know [Z]" (55). The text queries 'your' right to make the narrator representative of Chinese people. It asks us to consider the consequences of 'your' getting to know her more broadly.

3.4. Translating the Second Person

This section explores the role of Z's lover as a domesticating and foreignising node. It considers how the second-person pronoun inspires us to affectively identify with a vantage point other than our own at the same time as it encourages us to assert our own discrete 'you-ness' and exert our own vantage point. In translation terms, the reading self undertakes a foreignising movement toward the lover's vantage point in an act of identification, while the self-in-the-world's domesticates the lover's vantage point in an act of non-identification. The immanent ambivalence of such translations is significant because the lover regularly embodies the language and spatial 'standards'. Foreignisation therefore represents the assimilation and enactment of the 'standards', while domestication involves adjudicating the lover's appropriation of the 'standards' and disputing his regulatory behaviours. The second-person pronoun therefore affects us to take possession of lover's vantage point and simultaneously to critique that vantage point. As I show, one effect of this is that readers are moved to be highly self-conscious of the relationship between their linguistic and spatial performances and those of the lover.

In order to maintain the affects of reading the second-person pronoun, this section refers to the lover as 'you' throughout, conjugating verbs accordingly (i.e. "you are"

rather than “‘you’ is”). I specify ‘you’ as ‘the lover’ or ‘he’ only where pertinent for understanding. My use of ‘you’ in this section interpellates my readers and co-implicates them in the hybrid ‘you’ of the text. This performative move aims to disrupt the kind of distant writing that sometimes characterises literary criticism (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the specificities of professional critique). It builds self-reflection into the reading process. My readers and I together rediscover the textual ‘you’ and our relationship to ‘you’. Readers’ patience and openness to this performance of the second person will, I hope, be rewarded by a revealingly hybrid reading experience.

First, I want to clarify the effects of the second person. When we read literature, we experience the second person multiply as referring both to ourselves outside the text and to a narratee inside the text, as well as implying the narrator who generates ‘you’ (Hantzis, 1988, pp.3-4; p.47).¹⁰⁴ This can happen whether or not the second person is strictly ‘autotelic’, which Richardson defines as second person uses which directly and deliberately address both actual readers and characters (2006, pp.30-32). ‘You’ in general may have autotelic effects. This is because, in the English language at least, the second person is distinctly ‘indefinite’: it can refer to subject and object, and it “blends the personal and the indefinite” (Staels, 2004, p.164). During reading, the second person referent is more self-assimilable when ‘you’ are conveyed more generically, or when readers share with ‘you’ either physical or social characteristics or cultural or political beliefs. It is less assimilable when the text increasingly specifies ‘you’ such that readers can no longer recognise themselves as ‘you’ (Fludernik, 1994, p.452). Nonetheless, readers’ initial identification with or as ‘you’ often prevents them from differentiating

¹⁰⁴ I should qualify that it is unlikely Hantzis would deem *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* a second-person point of view narrative for reasons that it uses a first-person narrator and because it is the narrator who generates the ‘you’ (see Hantzis, 1988, p.47). The text is more properly considered peripheral second-person fiction (see Fludernik, 1994, p.449). Nonetheless, Hantzis’ description of the processes by which we read and make sense of the second person remains relevant.

entirely between themselves and the specified narratee (Hantzis, 1988, p.70). Readers are “compelled to identify” with ‘you’, even if they have since recognised that the second person specifies a character in the text (Hantzis, 1988, p.32). Some texts insist that readers identify as a highly specific ‘you’ precisely in order to reveal things to readers things about themselves that were previously unacknowledged (Fludernik, 1994, p.452). By way of example, Fludernik argues that Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* (1988) deploys the second person both generically and specifically in order to encourage readers to take on the colonial guilt of the specific North America tourist to which ‘you’ refers (see 1994, pp.452-453). The second person does not move readers to simply exchange their vantage point for that of a given narratee, but rather moves them to reflect on the relationship between their vantage point and that of the narratee. The second person may therefore inspire a transformative identificatory process through which readers recognise important and uncomfortable characteristics of their selfhoods.

Allow me to briefly construe these understandings of the second person by way of my model of reading. The second person splits the reader: the reading self aligns with the narratee through foreignisation, while the self-in-the-world domesticates ‘you’ in order to insist on its disparate existence as an addressee or extratextual onlooker. As such, the second person calls upon the reading self and the self-in-the-world to cooperatively form an interstitial reading subject who is neither the intradiegetic narratee nor the extratextual addressee but the embodiment of their relations. At the same time, and because the second-person address also implicitly refers to the narrator’s consciousness insofar as she generates the ‘you’ (Hantzis, 1988, p.47), readers are tasked to mediate between this interstitial vantage point and their comprehension of the narrator Z’s vantage point. The second person therefore prompts processes of self-reflexive transformation.

One might expect that *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*' use of the second person is too specific to stimulate identificatory processes. Responses to the novel online, however, demonstrate that the second person does affect readers to identify as 'you', and to reflect on the differences between their imagined relationship with Z and 'your' relationship with Z. To highlight just one response, Lesley Atherton (2019), for example, recognises that "Guo doesn't present an overly clear picture of 'you' [...] So, the English person is anonymous and nameless, and could easily be the position of the reader."¹⁰⁵ Through the second-person address, "the reader is invited to put themselves into the position of the 'you' – Z's lover" (Atherton, 2019, np). Perhaps because 'you' so strongly evokes an narratee inside the text and an addressee outside the text, Atherton reports having "had a strong feeling that [Z] referred to someone else as you, but [that she] couldn't find it when [she] scanned through [the book] again" (2019, np). It appears that *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* provides sufficient experiences of 'you' as generic to prompt hybrid responses through which readers identify and non-identify as 'you'.

If we return to the text, it is significant that an early instance of the second person conveys 'you' in acutely generic ways. In 'homosexual', which narrates Z's first encounter with 'you', the protagonist tells us: "You tell me your name, but how I remember English name? Western name are un-rememberable, like all Western look the same. But I want remember you, want remember the difference you with others" (48). Z produces 'you' as English, and as interchangeable with Westerners in general. In so

¹⁰⁵ G265 seems to have a similar experience of the second person. They write: "the book causes two relationships to unfold--that between Zhuang and her lover, and that between Zhuang and the reader. These two relationships have the potential to be very different, and the potential difference between them is where the beauty of the book lies." Though G265 doesn't specify the role of the second person in their reading, they make parallels between themselves and the lover as fellow interlocutors with Z in a way that implies the affects of the second person. G265 later talks explicitly about the extent to which readers might distance themselves from the lover's vantage point and 'your' insistent attempts to "silence [Z]". This suggests that they are sensitive to their implied associations with 'you'.

doing, the second person encourages readers who identify as English (as selves-in-the-world) to identify as ‘you’ (via their reading selves), and to be subjected to Z’s homogenisation. Those same readers may recognise that Z here enacts a reversal of a salient and pernicious prejudice as to the homogeneity of non-Western peoples through a circuit of domestication (which evokes the prejudice) and foreignisation (which suspends the immediacy and authority of the prejudice).¹⁰⁶ They may therefore recognise themselves being exposed to a prejudice in a way that projects and disturbs their own potential prejudices toward non-Westerners. Of course, as a result of this kind of reading, selves-in-the-world may reassert their discrete existence outside the text, given that their partial identification as ‘you’ risks implicating themselves in the perpetuation of xenophobic and racist prejudices. In her non-professional reading of the novel, Atherton (2019) notes precisely the difficulty of aligning with “an unlikeable ‘you’”. Here we see clearly some of the political stakes of readers’ identification with the intradiegetic narratee, and the extent to which they may be moved to challenge (what are or become) their own beliefs through disidentification.

Having explored the effects of the second person on reading, I now move to consider how, in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, ‘you’ at times embody both the language ‘standard’ and the spatial ‘standard’, and accordingly how the second person moves readers to reproduce as well as contest the ‘standards’. ‘You’ claim the role of Z’s tutor in linguistic and spatial performance. This is clear from the moment ‘you’ meet her. In ‘homosexual’, ‘you’ teach her the words ‘patisserie’ and ‘chocolate éclair’. Z tells us: “You speak slowly with slowly moving lips, like Mrs Margaret” (49). The lover does not only resemble Z’s language tutor, Mrs Margaret in the way he communicates with her. Moreover, he later ‘corrects’ the protagonist’s conversational

¹⁰⁶ In ‘venice’, the protagonist refers explicitly to a variety of this prejudice: “Westerners can’t tell the difference of a group of Chinese. In their eyes, we all look the same” (231).

English in a way that parallels Mrs Margaret's own teaching practice. In 'bachelor,' Z and her lover's conversation echoes that between Z and Mrs Margaret twenty pages earlier. Compare the following excerpts from 'homesick' and 'bachelor':

"Would you like some tea?"
"No," I say.
She looking at me, her face suddenly frozen. Then she asking me again:
"Would you like some coffee then?"
"No. I don't want."
"Are you sure you don't want anything?"
"No. I don't want anything wet," I saying loudly, precisely.
Mrs. Margaret looking very upset. (36)

First day I arrive, our conversation like this:
I say: '*I eat. Do you eat?*'
You correct me in proper way. '*I want to eat. Would you like to eat something with me?*'
You ask: '*Would you like some coffee?*'
I say: '*I don't want coffee. I want tea.*'
You change it: '*A cup of tea would be delightful.*'
Then you laughing at my confusing face, and you change your saying: '*I would love a cup of tea, please.*'
I ask: 'How you use the word "love" on tea?' (56-57)

These two excerpts are formally and thematically parallel. Formally, they prioritise turn-taking, emphasising the corrective attitude to which Z is subject. Thematically, they represent similar dialogues about hot beverages in which both Mrs Margaret and 'you' attempt to teach Z how to speak not just 'standard' English, but how to speak politely. In 'homesick', the protagonist reveals that politeness does not come easily to her because "China not have *politeness* in same way" (37; original emphasis).¹⁰⁷ In 'your' conversation with Z, the spatial dimensions of politeness become clearer. The protagonist is a guest in 'your' home: it is "[f]irst day I arrive" (56). 'You' typically live there alone: "you are really *bachelor*" (56). The text guides us toward an appreciation of the lover's linguistic tutelage of Z as a kind of spatial tutelage 'You' encourage Z to be linguistically

¹⁰⁷ It is unclear what differences Z is referring to here, but it is understood that politeness customs can vary by native language and native country (Haugh and Kádár, 2017, p.603), and by society (Fraser, 1990, p.220).

indirect because she has less social power in ‘your’ home. On this reading, the lover might be said to illuminate the extent to which the spatial ‘standard’ dictates that requests made by guests must be invisibly communicated so as to reduce the impediment to the one who belongs and, as a corollary, to maintain the uneven social relations of the interaction.¹⁰⁸

The second person in the second excerpt is significant here. As my abiding use of ‘you’ conveys, the reading self may foreignise the text, which involves taking up the lover’s intradiegetic voice, and modelling and calling for the assimilation of a particular way of speaking, which is called “proper” in view of its pertinence to ‘you’ and Z’s spatial relations. Provisionally, if this role is assumed by the self-in-the-world, ‘you’ may even “laugh[h] at [Z’s] confusing face” when she fails to reproduce this “proper” speech (57). Additionally or alternatively, the self-in-the-world may resist the concession of its material, epistemic and experiential position: “‘you’ are not ‘me’”. It might instead domesticate the text and reassert its own vantage point, which necessitates producing differences between its extratextual vantage point and that of the intradiegetic narratee. This foreignising and domesticating interpretive labour may play out in different ways depending on readers’ material, epistemic and experiential circumstances and the extent to which they identify and non-identify as ‘you’. For example, ‘you’ may be perceived as rude, pedantic or insensitive, or may be seen to be making arbitrary demands of Z’s linguistic performance in order to make an example of her non-native speech and to undermine her belonging in ‘your’ home and in London. ‘You’ in this case would likely be domesticated as ‘not me’ given our resistance to acts of negative self-identification during reading. Or ‘you’ may be read as competent, helpful, or justified in ‘your’ tutelage (it is ‘your’ home after all, and ‘you’ are a native practitioner of language and space)

¹⁰⁸ Brown and Levinson (1987) might describe this as a Z being guided away from ‘negative face threatening acts’. However, their work is based on the notion that politeness is universal, a hypothesis that Z here leads us to dispute.

whilst ‘I’ may be understood as insolent, insecure and exasperatingly slow to learn the mores of language and space.¹⁰⁹ Or ‘you’ may be interpreted severally – for example, as patient and helpful at first, but as unnecessarily rude when ‘you’ laugh in her face. By the time that we finish reading the episode in full, we may also revise our approach to the lover, be it more or less domesticating or foreignising. The episode concludes with ‘you’ asking Z whether she is enjoying the meal ‘you’ have prepared: “You wait. But patience maybe running out, so you answer you question in my voice: *‘Yes, I like the food very much. It is delicious. It is yami’*” (57; original emphasis). ‘You’ ape Z’s linguistic performance in ways that selves-in-the-world may variously find offensive or humorous, such that they adapt their reading of the preceding dialogue in more domesticating/non-identificatory or foreignising/identificatory ways.

Notwithstanding the diversity of possible interpretations, in reading the second person, readers are able to participate in a translation of themselves and their particular outlook insofar as they are compelled to rethink themselves from an imagined vantage point in the text. This is true even though identification with the lover may be utterly unconscious, an instant of indecision arising from the initial ambiguity of ‘you’. Readers who proceed by way of foreignisation and domestication gain an opportunity to reflect on the similarities and differences between their own spatial and linguistic performances and those of the lover. ‘You’ here becomes a reflective node of foreignising and domesticating traffic through which, in short, we might be prompted to ask “Am I doing this? *Do* I do this?”. Through a hybridised reading of ‘you’, we may therefore be affected toward new ethical and political regard for the ways that our performances of language and space produce identities and determine their agencies and mobilities. Specifically, by not identifying with, but observing the lover’s behaviour, we may be affectively disposed

¹⁰⁹ These predicted responses are based on comments posted on the Goodreads thread, ‘Is the boyfriend an artist or a jerk?’.

to recognise the politics of the spatial ‘standard’, which is mobilised by a self-asserted in-group, and which disproportionately threatens the belonging of migrants and second language speakers. Through potentially uncomfortable identifications with the lover, we may also be moved to reflect ethically on the ways in which we might, going forward, both engage in different or diverse performances of space, and conceive of divergent performances of space as legitimate unto themselves. The second person therefore empowers us to perform readings in which we self-reflexively implicate our way of producing language and space in the social exclusion of migrants and second-language speakers, and as such in which we imagine alternative ways of performing and conceiving of space.

The significance of our implication in the lover’s viewpoint has the potential to grow as we learn more about him. We gradually gain more information about ‘you’ through reported and direct speech, and through ‘your’ letters and diaries which the protagonist reads while the ‘you’ are away, visiting a friend in Devon, and which she reproduces in the diary-dictionary that we read. In what follows, I focus on the protagonist’s characterisation of the lover as a professional protestor, who makes a virtue of manual labour. I show that Z undertakes foreignising translations of the lover through the lens of China and Maoism. Subsequently, I consider the way in which Z’s translation of the lover solicits acutely hybrid readings through which we produce him through the distinct vantage point of Z and the implied vantage point of the ‘you’. This has two key implications for the affects of translating of the second person. First, insofar as the vantage points of ‘you’ and Z clearly produce space differently, the text’s willed combination and readers’ ensuing negotiation of them makes the production of space visible. As such we may be moved to register the specificity and conditionality of our ways of thinking about space, and notwithstanding the abiding influence of the spatial

‘standard’ on the construction of society and inhabitants. Second, given that the second person implicates us in the lover’s partial production of space – his protesting and his advocacy of manual labour – we are affected to generate our own productions of space on a global scale and to recognise their embeddedness in the spatial ‘standard’.

Let us start with the protagonist’s account of ‘your’ political protesting before ‘you’ became a youth worker, based on her reading of an old diary. Z relays one of ‘your’ diary entries in the following way:

You feel empty that kind of hunting-boy-life, so you become campaigner, a demon-strator. You for campaign against the capitalism, against the McDonald developing, and you go India stopping mining companies doing developmenting there. You go with young demon-strator group to everywhere, Delhi, Calcutta, Mexico, Los Angeles...Always drifting around. But I thinking maybe you not know what want to do in your life. Or why you travel so much? (96)

This passage presents two possible coincident operations of interpretive translation, as we recursively develop our relationship to Z’s vantage point and as we develop our relationship to the lover. Taking each in turn, I begin with detailed account of our translation of Z’s position. First, the protagonist links ‘your’ interest in political protest to ‘your’ unsatisfying romantic and sexual encounters. Z’s remarks may compel a foreignising response capable of processing her comically disruptive characterisation of political protest as an alternative to promiscuity, and a domesticating response able to invoke the self-in-the-world’s conventional or familiar ideas about political protest. She proceeds to refer to ‘your’ “campaign against the capitalism, against the McDonald developing” and in “India stopping mining companies doing developmenting there”, whose worldly contexts may elicit domestication. But Z conveys ‘your’ activity in these contexts in alienating ways. In what is likely taken for non-native speech, she evokes “demon-strator[s]”, “the capitalism”, “developmenting”. She attributes surprising

motivations to ‘your’ political campaigning, viewing it as a symptom of “not know[ing] what [‘you’] want to do in your life”. Readers are therefore also encouraged to participate in a foreignisation of the text through which they align with the protagonist’s vantage point and reimagine the meaning of ‘your’ protesting as an ill-conceived, self-serving and (and therefore demonic?) project. The urgency of foreignisation is increased by Z’s insistent conceptualisation of ‘your’ protesting as a kind of personal refuge or means of self-discovery. She lists ‘your’ destinations in a way that evokes a ‘jet-set’ lifestyle, and even conflates ‘your’ campaigning with “travel” in the final line. The particular destinations listed – “Delhi, Calcutta, Mexico, Los Angeles” – may tutor some readers to recognise the extent to which ‘your’ acts of protest are not only forms of travel, but also embedded in orientalist forms of knowledge production insofar as they locate negative aspects of the global capitalist world-system elsewhere. In this sense, and because ‘your’ protests are premised on a socioeconomic hierarchy of space and mobility, readers may also be stirred to recognise protest as spatial performance that is not antithetical to but firmly within the spatial ‘standard’ and its conception of Western society and the rest of the world. Ultimately, then, Z motivates us to engage with protest in a hybridised way. We are encouraged to domesticate protest by way of our preexisting conceptions of protest and knowledge of anti-capitalist and environmental protest histories. But we are also motivated to foreignise protest by way of Z’s imagined sense of ‘your’ motivations (distinctly ‘Western’ self-interest, pleasure and escape) and the implicit connections she draws between protest and the spatial ‘standard’, including its delimitation and characterisation of spaces and its associated exclusive privileges of mobility.

With our translations of Z’s vantage point in mind, let us now focus on our translations of the second person. As my preservation of the ambiguity of ‘you’ is intended to suggest, the perseverance of the second person in this passage solicits hybrid

readings through which readers implicate themselves in the lover's implied vantage point and insist on their differences with the lover. Though Z negates 'your' version of the story in her reading and rewriting of 'your' diary, we likely appreciate that this is not 'your' description of 'your' work as a political campaigner based on earlier reproduced excerpts from 'your' diary. 'Your' implied view is instead the political integrity (or revolutionary potential) and self-sacrifice of 'your' involvement in campaigning. We momentarily and partially identify as 'you' through foreignisation, and subsequently domesticate 'you' as intradiegetic, not me. Between these processes, we may in different degrees allow the intradiegetic 'you' to affect our understanding of ourselves. For example, we may be moved to interrogate the extent to which we take as self-evident the motivations around even anti-capitalist and environmentalist protests. We may link our previous conceptions of the legitimacy of protest as a condition of our relative privilege. Tellingly, A33 reports that the text "makes you think on cultural differences in a new way." A33 uses 'the indefinite *you*' here (see Staels, 2004). Consequently, the second person evokes multiple referents, including A33, but also possibly ourselves and the narratee in the text. A33 therefore implicitly highlights the way in which they, potentially like us and the narratee, were motivated to ethically reconstitute their horizon. This also seems to provide access to a politics of self-recognition whereby A33 now recognises the limits of the ways in which they previously understood cultural differences. Alternatively, readers' temporary inhabitation of the lover's vantage point may offer them insight into the ways in which Western protestors narrate to themselves the efficacy and virtue of protest. It may grant readers with acutely different outlooks on and experiences of protest notions of superiority given that they fail to coincide with the book's implied audience (here, liberal 'Westerners'). Of course, readers may also desire to make a case for protest. Their hybrid responses to Z's translation of 'your' protests, and to the second person may prompt a

reactive domestication through which selves-in-the-world insist that Z is wrong about ‘your’ protesting (which may refer expansively to the lover and to readers themselves, depending on their relationship to protest).

It is worth noting that the themes and translatory effects of the above episode ‘drifter’ recall a much earlier episode ‘slogan’ from the ‘February’ section in which the protagonist inadvertently enters the middle of the anti-Iraq war protest march after getting lost. Indeed, its formal and thematic connections to the narration of ‘slogan’ increase the likelihood that readers translate and reimagine protest insofar as it initiates a self-reflexive response to Western protest culture. The relevant passage from ‘slogan’ appears as follows:

[T]oday big confusion in streets. Everywhere people marching to say no to war in Iraq.

‘No war for oil!’

‘Listen to your people!’

The demon-strators from everywhere in Britain, socialists, Communists, teachers, students, housewives, labour workers, Muslim womans covered under the scarf with their children... They marching to the Hyde Park. [...] I search Chinese faces in the march team. Very few. Maybe they busy and desperately earning money in those Chinese Takeaways.

People in march seems really happy. Many smiles. They feel happy in sunshine. Like having weekend family picnic. When finish everyone rush drink beers in pubs and ladies gather in tea houses, rub their sore foots.

Can this kind of demon-stration stop war? (28-29)

Z is surprised to see British people practicing political activism in a spirit akin to a “weekend family picnic”. Despite suggesting that the “demon-strators from everywhere in Britain”, we may notice that the demographic she identifies is actually fairly limited. It comprises a large contingent of the Old Left or those sympathetic to socialist values, an educated class, and “[v]ery few” Chinese people (who are portrayed as too economically precarious to protest, and in this sense who may stand in for working-class

immigrants and working classes more widely).¹¹⁰ She reads protesters' display of behaviour through the lens of "the English version of *Little Red Book*" which, as she states at the beginning of the episode, is "[n]ot easy read but very useful argue with English using Chairman Mao *slogans*" (28; original emphasis). The Mao quote about revolution that proceeds her narration of the anti-Iraq war protest is clearly intended to convey the demonstration's lack of revolutionary potential insofar as "**revolution is not a dinner party [...] it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous and magnanimous**" (29; original emphasis). The civility and jovial atmosphere of the anti-Iraq war protest is therefore highly strange to Z. As in the previous example, Z's representation of protest encourages domesticating and foreignising responses through which we are challenged to reconsider the self-obviousness of Western forms of protest, and to register their taking place *within* a prevailing logic – the spatial 'standard' and its particular production of society. This is because the protagonist's narration is hybridised. It evokes the February demonstration against the Iraq war – even reproducing its popular slogans – and therefore solicits domesticating responses through which readers furnish the narrative with their knowledges and experiences of the real-life event. But it also reimagines the demonstrations from an exterior vantage point, reconstituting them as politically "confus[ed]" according to Chairman Mao's views on revolution. Z's narration may therefore produce foreignising responses that suspend prior understandings of the anti-Iraq war protests and entertain Z's imaginative rendition as truthful. Between these interpretive translations, readers may appreciate the duplicity of (Western) protest as an enactment of the spatial 'standard', and their embodied and epistemic sustenance of its duplicity. As blogger Amejoys (2014) writes: "Seeing one's culture reflected through the eyes of the other can remind us that our society can be

¹¹⁰ A demographic study of the 15 February 2003 demonstrations against the Iraq war concurs with Z's portrait (see Walgrave, Rucht and Van Aelst, 2010).

excluding or negative”. They suggest that the reading process othered them, implicating them in a process of ethical self-reconstruction, and made them return to the self with an increased awareness of the politics of culture, including the culture of a spatial ‘standard’ and protest’s place in it.

Having explored the significance of Z’s characterisation of ‘you’ as a professional protester, let us now move to consider her account of the lover’s investment in the virtues of physical work over intellectual forms of labour. In a sustained exploitation of the ambiguity of ‘you’, the narrative encourages a rethinking of ‘your’ preference for physical work or manual labour by spatially and epistemically relocating it first, in contemporary China and second, in Maoist China at the height of the Cultural Revolution. Let us track each of these spatial and epistemic translations in turn. In ‘physical work’, the protagonist translates ‘your’ preference for manual work through the lens of capitalism’s manifestation in China:

‘For me mental work better than physical work,’ I say. ‘Nobody wants physical work. Only you, and my parents.’ I put the salad bowl in front of you.

[...] In my hometown, we don’t use these two words:

Physical work / mental work

All the work is called ‘讨生活’ – scavenge the living. Making shoes, making tofus, making plastic bags, making switches ... All these works rely on our bodies. And our bodies earn our living back. Now I come to abroad studying English. And I do that with my brain, And I know in future I earn living from my brain.

You insist physical worker better than intellectual.

‘An intellectual can have a big brain, but a very small heart.’

I never heard that before. Why you think of that?

‘I want a simple life,’ you say. ‘I want to go back to the life of a farmer.’ (152-153)

Z here equates ‘your’ satisfaction in physical work with her parents’ determination to “becom[e] rich [...] from making shoes in our little town” (5). Immediately prior, the protagonist has relayed ‘your’ disdain for multinational corporations. ‘You’ carry out

contracts for Red Bull and Vodaphone briefly before ‘you’ quit or ‘your’ employment is terminated: “one day you stop getting these kinds job, I don’t know why” (152). We also learn in the earlier episodes ‘charm’ and ‘noble’ of ‘your’ distaste for wealth and capitalist accumulation. The protagonist’s comparison of the capitalist activities of her parents and ‘your’ anti-capitalist activities is therefore anachronistic. As such, this comparison may invite readers to doubt Z’s understanding of the meaning(s) of physical work in a domesticating move wherein the self-in-the-world variously reprocesses the protagonist and her way of meaning as deviant or foreign according their preexisting episteme and the lover’s episteme with which they may have more or less aligned depending on their response to ‘you’. Such readers might variously deride, loathe, or sympathise with the protagonist’s interpretative ‘failure’. But, even temporarily, Z’s innovative comparison of her parents’ investment in manual labour and ‘your’ preference for manual labour solicits foreignising responses through which the reading self suspends disbelief in her viewpoint and co-produces similarities between the capitalist exploits of her parents and ‘your’ anti-capitalist activities. We are recruited to imaginatively create continuities between capitalism and anti-capitalism, as manifest around the world.

The second person is significant here. It implies that selves-in-the-world share with the lover a moralisation of physical labour, which the protagonist-narrator moves us to render linguistically, spatially and politically specific, and ultimately to disrupt. Specifically, through our self-othering embodiment as ‘you’, we are encouraged to recognise that ‘physical work’ is specific to ‘our’ English-speaking society and its conception of the relations of production because, in Z’s hometown, people do not distinguish between mental and physical work. We are also tutored to dispute ‘our’ perception of physical work as both integral to “‘a simple life’” and a nostalgic form of

“go[ing] back” in time.¹¹¹ Z clearly describes physical work as ubiquitous – even dominant – in contemporary Zhejiang. It is only because the protagonist is gaining a qualification in English that she believes she will secure more lucrative, intellectual employment. Manual labour is represented as distinctly modern. Locals in Zhejiang province are “[m]aking shoes, making tofus, making plastic bags, making switches” as part of the modern capitalism world-system. For Z, physical work is neither a return to a near past nor a humble way of life, but a contemporary, global capitalist reality. Her translation of ‘your’ viewpoint therefore empowers us to engage with the particularity of the relations of production, manifest by the spatial ‘standard’. We may be moved toward a situated politics that is responsive to our own investment in the spatial ‘standard’ and its associated delegitimisation and primitivisation of other modes of production and ways of performing space. ‘Your’/our conception perception of manual labour is clearly premised on the spatial division of labour enacted by the spatial ‘standard’ insofar as the physical work enacted in the compound in Z’s village is neither represented nor thought about in the same way as ‘you’ conceived of and perceive farming at Lower End Farm or elsewhere. We may also develop the ethical flexibility required to reimagine ourselves and our spaces differently, in more sensitive and even self-othering ways. This may mean thinking and performing space outside the project of ‘standardisation’.

The protagonist subsequently translates ‘your’ making a virtue of physical work through Maoism and the Cultural Revolution. Responding to ‘your’ critique of intellectuals as heartless, she narrates:

In China, intellectual is everything *noble*. It mean honour, dignity, responsibility, respect, understanding. To be intellectual in China is splendid dream to youth who from peasant background. Nobody blame him, even in Culture Revolution time and seemed these

¹¹¹ It might be that ‘you’ literally want to go back in time because ‘you’ talk about having previously living on Lower End Farm in Cornwall. However, it seems unlikely that ‘you’ would want to return to Lower End Farm because ‘you’ do not seem to remember ‘your’ time there particularly fondly (see 93, 308-309, 335).

people suffered, but really was time for them having privileged to being re-educated, get to know another different life.
So if you don't want to be intellectual, then you a Red Guard too like Red Guards who beat up intellectuals during Culture Revolution. A Red Guard who living in the West. (153; original emphasis).

Z stresses the nobility of intellectual labour in the People's Republic of China given its recent history of persecuting intellectuals. She seems to refer here to the 1960s 'Up to the mountains and down to the countryside' policy (上山下乡) through which the People's Republic of China relocated millions of the urban youth to mountainous and pastoral areas to be *re-educated* in manual labour by workers there (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, p.252).¹¹² Those readers that are struck by the language of this passage may recall and re-read through the lens of indentured labour Z's assertion at the very beginning of the text that "I must *re-educate*, must match this capitalism freedom and Western democracy" (10; emphasis added). If those same readers partially domesticate the reference to the People's Republic of China's re-education policy as a system of indentured labour then they may be moved to re-read and foreignise Z's migration to London and capitalist "re-educat[ion]" through the lens of the re-education and displacement of the Chinese 'elite' enacted in the 1960s. More simply, Z invites us to recode British public space as well as the state's cultural and political milieu in terms of Maoist labour camps. The protagonist translates 'your' vantage point – 'your' preference for physical work and the episteme on which that preference is premised – to Communist China and toward a Maoist view of intellectuals and its contemporary inversion. This translation is increasingly explicit: "if you don't want to be intellectual, then you a Red Guard too, like Red Guards who beat up intellectuals during Cultural Revolution [...] I

¹¹² MacFarquhar and Schoenhals report that "over the twelve-year period 1967–1979, the number of rusticated 'educated youth' totaled 16,470,000" (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, p.251). Bernstein estimates that around ten percent of the urban population were relocated to the countryside following the Cultural Revolution (1977, p.2).

never thought I would like a Red Guard” (154). Readers will of course have diverse awarenesses and knowledges of the Red Guards. Some may immediately invoke via domestication the self-organised student movement, responsible for the persecution and murder of artists, teachers and other intellectual and ‘bourgeois’ figures (including graduates, urban employees, and ethnic minorities),¹¹³ and whose right to rebel was endorsed by Chairman Mao (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, p.102).¹¹⁴ Some may foreignise the text’s representation of Red Guards as those “who beat up intellectuals during Cultural Revolution”, and domesticate it as truthful. Some readers may proceed by way of combination of what the reading self aligns with in the text and what the self-in-the-world presumes to know outside the text. In any case, ‘your’ desire for “‘a simple life’” in which ‘you’ “‘go back to the life of a farmer’” is being represented as commensurate with ‘your’ identity as a Red Guard.

To once again highlight the distinctive affects of the second person, we as readers are being compelled to identify as ‘you’, a Red Guard. Readers may contest this self-identification through domesticating acts that reproduce the meaning of physical work by way of a different home culture than the People’s Republic of China. However resistant to the affects of the second person this approach may seem, it may still generate greater political sensitivity for the ways in which different societies represent and practice labour

¹¹³ During the purge of the perceived bourgeois class, there was a “witch hunt” in Inner Mongolia, geared toward locating political dissidents, which encompassed ethnic separatists, those who criticised the Communist Party of China (CPC), and those suspected of having connections with the New Inner Mongolian People’s Party or the main political opposition party, Kuomintang of China (KMT) (see MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, pp.257-259). Moreover, though Mao outwardly “advocated tolerance of a heterogeneity from which the truth of Marxist ideas would emerge and be recognized by all [...] in practice it was hard for the state and local political activists to draw the line between counter-revolutionaries and non-antagonistic dissent, particularly in the face of resistance to policies of collectivization and the like” (Young, 2001, p.186).

¹¹⁴ Chairman Mao dismantled the Red Guards on 28 July 1968 after Kuai Dafu, a Red Guard leader, organised the maiming and murder of Maoist propagandists sent to Tsinghua University to discourage factionalism and promote collectivism the day before (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, pp.249-250). Following the July rebellion, Mao ordered that Red Guard leaders be re-educated in the countryside like much of the rest of the population (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2008, p.251).

in space. For example, G180 explicitly refers to having developed a stronger awareness of the differences in viewpoint between China and the West. G180 notably withholds evaluating these vantage points' respective merits in a way that suggests that they learned to appreciate the validity of both. Notwithstanding, we are being carefully drawn into complementary foreignising responses that, in their self-alienating effects, prompt us to consider ways of adapting our performances of space – if not to engage more equitably with practitioners of space minoritised by the spatial 'standard', then certainly to prevent future associations with the Red Guards. In short, we are empowered to recognise our role in the actual and epistemic violence of the spatial 'standard', and to denaturalise the relationship between the spatial 'standard' and space so that other spatial imaginaries and realities are possible.

To this backdrop of 'your' characterisation as a professional protestor, with an uncritical preference for manual labour, let us explore episodes in which 'your' reproduction of the spatial 'standard' is more overt, and in which acts of domestication and foreignisation are more clearly connected to the spatial performances of 'you' and Z. In 'April', the same month in which Z reads 'your' old diaries and letters, and after the two have reconciled during a trip to Burham Beach, we encounter a short episode called 'free world'. I reproduce the relevant passages in full here to maintain the affects of the excerpt.

You say:

'I feel very lucky to be with you. We're going to have loads of exciting adventures together. Our first big adventure will be in west Wales. I'll show you the sea. I'll teach you to swim because it is shameful that a peasant girl cannot swim. I'll show you the dolphins in the sea, and the seals with their babies. I want you to experience the beauty of the peace and quiet in a Welsh cottage. I think you will love it there.'

You also say:

'Then I want to take you to Spain and France. I know that you'll love them. But we'll have to wait for a while. We need to earn some

money. I'll have to get more work doing deliveries in the van to boring rich people. Can you put up with me being so boring – or do you think you'll get fed up with me after a while?' (112)

Z's reportage of 'your' speech suggests that 'your' statements are not necessarily part of a conversation but rather a monologue in which she is not expected to actively participate. The lover's voice notably occupies half the episode. Moreover, the episode omits any direct speech from the narrator herself, and it is not clear if she responds to 'you'. 'Your' conversational dominance is important here because it reflects the fluency and confidence with which 'you' invoke representations of space and their attendant spatial practices whilst 'you' are promising to take Z travelling. Together with 'your' dictation of their future destinations (themselves representations of space), the repeated syntax – "I'll show you," "I'll teach you," "I want you," "I think you" – reproduces 'your' relative power, gained through an assimilation of the 'standard'. In so doing, 'your' speech implicitly denies Z belonging, agency and mobility. Indeed, these syntactical arrangements ossify Z as a novice compared with the lover, and an object whom 'you' as a subject seek to control.¹¹⁵

As the title of 'free world' and the episode's accompanying definition of the phrase anticipates, 'your' dreams of travel are not to be fulfilled. In her retrospective narration, Z explains:

you don't understand my visa limited situation. I am native Chinese from mainland of China. I am not of *free world*. [...] And I can't travel to Spain and France just to fun – I need show these embassy officer my bank account to apply my Europe visa. And my bank statements is never qualify for them. You a free man of free world. I am not free like you. (113; original emphasis)

¹¹⁵ In a later episode, in which 'you' explain to Z the process of applying for a Schengen visa and what to expect in Europe, 'you' similarly deny her agency. The protagonist-narrator notices and retrospectively narrates: "You talk to me like I am your child" (199).

The protagonist-narrator provides insight into the limited mobilities afforded to Chinese migrants, especially those whose access to financial capital is restricted. The second-person pronoun is important here insofar as it may see readers make connections between their extratextual spatial privileges and those of the intradiegetic narratee, and between their ignorance of those privileges and the narratee's own ignorance. Importantly, some readers may be moved to disidentify entirely with 'you', particularly if they do not enjoy privileges like citizenship of the 'free world' and free movement. Here, we see clearly the extent to which a greater specification of 'you' forecloses the expansive affects of the second person (see Fludernik, 1994, p.452). But, through a foreignisation of the lover's viewpoint, and a complementary domestication of its worldliness, other readers may appreciate that they share the lover's citizenship in Britain and residence in Europe, and/or his membership of the 'free world'. If we realise that we share with the intratextual narratee a (potentially unconscious) knowledge of the spatial 'standard' that attends upon Britain, 'your' monologue of future world travel aspirations engenders two distinctive hybrid translations, that also hybridise one another. On the narrative level, the reading self identifies as 'you', while the self-in-the-world supplies characteristics of readers' own identities in processes of non-identification. On the structural level, the self-in-the-world domesticates the text's capable reproduction of aspects of the spatial 'standard' (i.e. place names, leisure mobilities, a notion of 'your' belonging and competence etc.), while the reading self tracks the protagonist's disruption of the spatial 'standard' in her contestation of the transparency of signs like the free world and freedom of movement. These circuits clearly interact: for example, the reading self's foreignisation of Z's vantage point on the structural level furnishes the self-in-the-world's sense of the operations of the spatial 'standard' on the narrative level, enabling us to regard the exclusions that 'your' privileges entail.

These translations have the potential to produce a diversity of reactions. Selves-in-the-world might have a range of responses to the implied similarities between ourselves (as reading selves) and the lover, ranging from an agreement with and endorsement of the lover-as-self, to discomfort and shame, to outright denial. Individual readers' may themselves have diverse responses to 'you' at different moments of reading. Tellingly, A23 titles their Amazon review 'Who are you?' Likewise, selves-in-the-world may have a range of responses to Z's reconceptualisation of the spatial 'standard' as just that, a range of representations and practices that compel assimilation even as they determinedly exclude migrants like herself. Broadly, readers may be affected to re-legitimise the 'standard' or to sympathise with Z's situation; or they may consider whether there are alternative constitutions of space that could better serve migrants like Z. To evoke just one reading, A40 suggests that *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* "ma[kes] [us] look at a familiar world in a completely different way". A40 seems to foreignise Z's viewpoint, which, upon domestication, allows them to dispute their existing conception and perception of the world (which includes its spatial organisation by 'standards'). The second person therefore provides opportunities to engage politically with the exclusions and oppressions which the spatial 'standard' and our reproduction of it inflicts on migrants, and to reflect ethically on new, more egalitarian ways of producing space (whereby the 'free world' is not catachrestic, for example).

I now turn to my final example in which 'you' explicitly embody the spatial 'standard', and police Z's performances of space. Following 'free world', there is a page break, followed by a title page reading 'May'. Thus commences the next episode 'custom' in which Z and the lover are sitting in Seven Seas café, Hackney. The protagonist speaks to a waiter whilst 'you' studiously read 'your' newspaper, until she can wait no longer and interrupts 'your' reading:

‘You know what? I came this café before, sit here whole afternoon,’
I say.

‘Doing what?’ you put down the paper annoyed.

‘I read a porn magazine called *Pet House* for three hours, because I studied English from those stories. Checking the dictionary really took lots of time.’

You are surprised. ‘I don’t think you should read porn mags in a café. People will be shocked.’

‘I don’t care.’

‘But you can’t do that. You’ll make other people feel embarrassed.’

[...] ‘I think I go buy another porn magazine,’ I say, standing up.

‘Ok, you do whatever you want,’ you say shaking head. ‘This is Hackney after all. People will forgive you for not being *au fait* with the nuances of British customs.’ (118-119)

‘You’ behave as a censor. ‘You’ believe that Z shouldn’t, and even “can’t”, read pornographic magazines in a café, citing others’ shock and embarrassment. ‘You’ figure Z as an anomaly who makes others who are more “*au fait* with the nuances of British customs” uncomfortable. Her actions interrupt the propriety of the café, ruining its ambience for citizens. ‘You’ construct Z as not belonging in London. ‘You’ nonetheless acknowledge that Hackney residents ostensibly have their own attitude toward the spatial ‘standard’ – “‘This is Hackney after all. People will forgive you’”. ‘You’ identify a gap between the ‘standard’ and users’ performances of space in a way that implicitly undermines the authority of spatial ‘standard’. But by somewhat judgmentally citing Hackney as an example in which the dimensions of that gap are wider than elsewhere, ‘you’ read Hackney space users’ performances via the spatial ‘standard’, according to which they are deemed improper.

As we read this passage, we are compelled to embody both the intradiegetic ‘you’ (the lover) and an extratextual ‘you’ (ourselves) – to identify as the textual character who chastises Z and demands that she modify her behaviour, and to assert our identity as the material self outside the novel who merely observes both characters’ actions. At the same time, we are tasked to translate ‘your’ behaviour, both from ‘your’ perspective (which consists of that which readers assimilate of the intradiegetic voice via the reading self and

the self-in-the-world's extant vantage point) and from our negotiation of Z's perspective. The intradiegetic narratee constructs Z as not belonging. The reading self performs this discourse. But the self-in-the-world may agree or disagree with the reading self-as-lover in varying degrees depending on its investment in the spatial 'standard' and therefore the extent to which it identifies as 'you'. In any case, the self-in-the-world's response may change during reading. This is because Z's vantage point intervenes in 'your' construction of her non-belonging. First, she participates in an exchange with the Cypriot waiter at Seven Seas Café in which they share in the irony of Cypriots cooking full English breakfasts for the English and in which the waiter confirms Z's implicit suspicions throughout that narrative that "the English [...] can't cook" (117).¹¹⁶ Readers' responses to this interaction may vary depending on, amongst other things, the extent to which they are invested in English culinary skills. They may find it humorously observant¹¹⁷ or offensive¹¹⁸ for example. But this shared joke between Z and the waiter can be seen to imply her belonging in the Hackney café. Moreover, his Cypriot identity is important because it reveals that Britain and London are more diverse than 'you' and 'your' insistent mobilisation of the spatial 'standard' can comprehend. Second, Z belongs in Hackney precisely because, as 'you' suggest, Hackney residents constantly contravene standards of behaviour, including the spatial 'standard'. We witness one such contravention in the episode. Bearing in mind that 'you' identify the protagonist's reading of a porn magazine in the café as transgressive, it is significant that Z narrates the presence of a man, eating breakfast and "concentrat[ing] on page [of the *Daily Mirror* newspaper] with picture of

¹¹⁶ See 'bestseller', for example, in which Z narrates having dreamed that she wrote a cookbook called "*Getting to Grips with Noodles: 300 ways of Chinese cooking*" (294), believing that it originated with her "hunger for Chinese food" (295).

¹¹⁷ A18 confesses to having "also loved how [the text] [...] poked fun at us", revealing both their impression of the novel as funny and their hybrid identification with both values it ridicules and the act of ridicule itself.

¹¹⁸ See A29's review: "Z's impression of British culture is almost completely negative and unnecessarily unflattering, another thing adding to the main character's frustrating immaturity".

half naked blonde smiling” (118). The man’s actions diminish the authority of ‘your’ later critique of Z reading porn in the café insofar as they normalise, and even sanction, the reading of sexually explicit materials in public.

As in the previous analysis, then, we are provided with two frames for reading the episode. The first frame originates with the lover, and the extent to which we identify as ‘you’ and supply in-the-world knowledges and experiences to comprehend ‘you’. The second frame originates with Z, and the extent to which the reading self suspends ‘your’ existing spatial and epistemic coordinates. The reading process may affectively dispose us to recognise the politics of space, the severity with which we/others police migrants’ spatial performances compared with those of locals. Just as mastery of the language ‘standard’ of the European coloniser does not, as Fanon suggests, gift the speaker whiteness (Fanon, 2008, p.8), mastery of the spatial ‘standard’ does not grant the practitioner belonging or nativity. This is not simply because the non-native practitioner of space’s assimilation and reproduction of the spatial ‘standard’ is inevitably received as an imperfect imitation, as Chow has suggested of “the upbeat Americanized tones” of Indian call centre agents (Chow, 2014, p.9). It is instead because the spatial ‘standard’ is not the only discursive system that produces identity. Z is subject to other processes of identity-formation that produce her race, ethnicity and belonging, including but not limited to the legal system and the language ‘standard’ as well as local practices of racialisation/ethnicisation. These systems interact with the spatial ‘standard’ and conspire to ensure that the spatial ‘standard’ is paradoxically unassimilable for some peoples. The reading process may also generate the ethical flexibility to imagine alternative performances of space, the basis for a new politics of space. We may imagine futures in which Hackney residents, given that they do not address themselves to the ‘standard’, are not subject to denigration by the ‘standard’, for example.

We have observed the ways in which *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*' use of the second person prompts us to recognise previously-unacknowledged aspects of our selfhood and its performance of space, their politics, and the ethical demand to perform space differently. This happens partly because the affects of the second person interact with the first-person narrator, Z's contestation of 'your' viewpoint and 'your' routine mobilisation of the spatial 'standard'. As Suzanne Keen has shown, the first person tends to solicit empathy (see Keen, 2006, p.219).¹¹⁹ Empathising with 'I' (Z), makes it difficult to empathise with 'you'. However, I conclude this section by acknowledging a troubling occasion in which 'your' investment in the authority and legitimacy of the spatial 'standard' is rewarded. This is the protagonist's rape, while travelling in Faro, Portugal. I respond to this section in order to highlight the ways in which, uncomfortably implicated in the justification of rape implied by the lover and Z's own reproductions of spatial 'standard', readers may undertake their own critique of the spatial 'standard' from without.

With 'your' help and advice, Z is granted a Schengen visa and goes travelling around Europe for a month. 'You' deem it important that she goes alone in order to develop her independence. Her journeys may be experienced as disrupting the spatial 'standard'. For example, she masturbates for the first time on the roof of a budget hotel in Tavira. However, her travelling prevents us from disputing entirely the spatial 'standard' and 'your' investment in 'standardised' space. The episodes that take place in Europe tacitly link the reproduction of the spatial 'standard' to safety and enjoyment.

¹¹⁹ Different factors can influence the effectiveness of the first person in soliciting empathy: "the category of first-person narratives, empathy may be enhanced or impeded by narrative consonance or dissonance, unreliability, discordance, an excess of narrative levels with multiple narrators, extremes of disorder, or an especially convoluted plot. Genre, setting, and time period may help or hinder readers' empathy. Feeling out of sorts with the implied readership, or fitting it exactly, may make the difference between a dutiful reading and an experience of emotional fusion" (Keen, 2007, xi).

They plot a causal relationship between the narrator's idiosyncratic production of space and the dangerous situations in which she finds herself. To explain, in several of the episodes narrating her European travel, the protagonist has uncomfortable encounters with men. However, it is in 'faro' that she has what we appreciate is her most traumatic experience when she is raped by a local man. It is also in 'faro' that this traumatic experience is most explicitly linked to Z's non-compliance with the spatial 'standard'. The protagonist is waiting for a train to Lisbon and is approached by a man as she "start[s] to read *Lonely Planet* on Lisbon with my small *Concise* dictionary" (247). He tells her: "Don't read the book. Look at the view. You should see it, not read the guide book" (248). He rehearses what the self-in-the-world might recognise as a familiar rhetoric around 'authentic' tourism.¹²⁰ On her request, he takes her to see the old town of Faro then offers to take her to the seaside. There, the two engage in consensual sexual touching. However, despite Z having instructed the man "[b]ut no plugging in", "he couldn't control himself anymore", and "takes out his penis from his jeans and pushes it into my body, rough, almost violent" (252). Afterwards, Z relays: "I feel a strong guilt, and danger. I despise myself. [...] the dirty feeling of my body is overwhelming. It sticks on my skin, my underwears, my jeans, and my white T-shirt. It is under my skin" (252-253). This sexual assault comes unexpectedly. We may also find its narration uncomfortable, particularly if we perceive the text as connecting the rape to the protagonist's behaviour. Are we to agree that she was raped because she failed to read the guidebook, because she initially consented to sexual contact, and because she ultimately felt guilty?

For G72, the rape scene changed their whole impression of the book for the worse. This is in part because they felt implicated in the rape scene's organising misogyny and

¹²⁰ See Huggan for an excellent critique of the authenticity of 'off-the-beaten track' or 'anti-tourist' tourism (2001, p.177-180).

its reproduction of spatial norms. Awarding the text just two stars on Goodreads, G72 writes:

Z travels around Europe. -- I think I have a longing for stories about solo female travellers. I want adventures. I want discovery, and excitement, and empowerment. I want a woman to be able to see the world in the way that men have been writing their travel memoirs for-fucking-ever. Where is my female Teju Cole? And, inevitably, I get instead awful narratives of women being abused. Women miserable and lonely. The undertones always: stay home. The world is too dangerous for you.

Z gets raped. That's what it is. I cannot stand it that the author thought that's what she deserved. Worse, that it was her fault and that she further needed punishment for how badly it was her fault. At this point, I no longer felt I could feel anything warm towards this book.

G72 reports having had a visceral reaction to the rape of Z. They are horrified to be implicated in making the protagonist responsible for the rape because she dared to travel alone and to seek “discovery” and “excitement”. Interestingly, they detest “that the author thought that's what [Z] deserved”. They may also be seen to imply her greater emotional proximity to the protagonist over the author or indeed the book. Following the rape scene and the narration of Z's guilt, G72 doubts the author's morality and “no longer felt [they] could feel anything warm towards this book”. Their reading concurs with Suzanne Keen's theory of narrative empathy, wherein “[e]xperiences of empathic inaccuracy [an affective non- or mis- alignment between reader and text] may contribute to a reader's outraged sense that the author's perspective is simply wrong” (Keen, 2007, xiii). If G72 seems to have an especially severe response, it is because they desired and projected that the narrative would develop in a different way, with “adventure” and “[female] empowerment”, and did not anticipate that it would be implicitly underpinned by a familiar sexist rhetoric that posits that women should “stay home” because “[t]he world is too dangerous for [them]”. G72 erases the material, spatial and epistemic differences between Z and themselves in a universalising feminist reading, which downplays the

importance of the protagonist's identity as a Chinese migrant with limited fluency in English. Nonetheless, G72 identifies the ways in which this episode encourages us to blame Z for the rape she experiences because she should have "stay[ed] home" or, by extension, that she should have been more careful or sensible, or adhered to the spatial 'standard' as embodied in this case by the *Lonely Planet* book on Lisbon.

Additional details support readings that connect Z's rape to her failure to read the *Lonely Planet*'s guide to Lisbon (or to adhere to another source of the spatial 'standard'), and her resultant non-'standard' performance of space. Consider that Z's European travel is preceded by an episode in which 'you' give her "some old maps" (199). These maps, especially as extended to Z by 'you', establish a 'standard' way to travel around Europe. Z uses one of these maps in the 'berlin' episode to find Klaus' flat, a man she met on the night train and with whom she stays briefly. She notably describes having found "the exactly right street, and the exactly right gate, and the exactly right door number. Because I got this Berlin map from London, from you" (223). Klaus is the only man not to try to take advantage of her, save for the old man she meets briefly in Dublin. The text thus encourages us to produce the spatial 'standard' as that which ensures safety and (sexual) propriety. This being the case, it is significant that Z makes no further mention of 'your' old maps and seems not to use them again after her stay in Berlin. Moreover, appended at the beginning of each episode is a hand-drawn map. These hand-drawn maps are topographically non-identical with existing maps of the relevant territories. Unlike existing maps, they also feature drawings of important landmarks and handwritten place names in English and Chinese. The reading self may be led to believe that Z herself doodles these maps, which the self-in-the-world domesticates as inaccurate or inappropriate. Through the topos of maps and counter-mapping practices, the text therefore seems to court foreignising and domesticating responses through which we

recognise her spatial performance as deviant. This forces us to engage with the possibility that her spatial impropriety is responsible for her rape.

This is not at all to suggest that all readers will read the rape scene in this way and will endorse Z's guilt. G72's response is proof that texts cannot make readers do anything without readers' consent. Instead, I recognise that the text implies a reading that is undergirded by 'your' reproduction of the spatial 'standard', which is never later contested. Readers like G72, however, remind us that readers have the ability to foreignise from without – to be ethically flexible in the face of political conditions with which they disagree. G72 disputes the text's implicit demonisation of Z as a rape survivor, and the perceived tendency of the world to blame rape survivors. The representation of Z's rape encourages an identification with 'you' and the worldly 'standard' that 'you' invoke, but for some readers it ultimately seems to elicit a *disidentification* with both 'you' and the worldly spatial 'standard'.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* encourages readers to enact a translation of the spatial 'standard'. I have used the paradigms of domesticating and foreignising translation in order to account for the way in which readers respond to texts' different productions of space. And I have foregrounded the affective synthesis that occurs between these two forms of translation such that readers gain access to ethical and political forms of engagement. This conceptualisation of reading as translation intervenes in contemporary translation debates that express concern over the dominant paradigms of foreignisation and domestication as wielded at the site of production insofar as it reinstalls both readers' and texts' agency at the site of consumption. In the reading of Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English*

Dictionary for Lovers, readers are empowered to develop a political sensitivity for their spatial and epistemic positionality as well as an awareness of how that specific site informs and affects their discursive production of others, at the same time as they may be moved to develop an ethical reflexivity capable of negotiating and challenging their spatial and epistemic vantage point. As we observed in the final section, readers also behave unpredictably and do not always take up the roles offered to them either by texts (in structures like the implied reader) or by critics (in notions like ‘Western readerships’).

In the wider context of this thesis, this chapter’s excavation of the diversity of reading as a space-making act is important in three key ways. First, it refines our conception of the relationship between identity/location and reading. For example, those readers who identify themselves as Londoners (e.g. G180) or Americans (e.g. G212) mobilise these geopolitical identities in radically different, albeit mutually critical and sophisticated ways. We can therefore neither generalise about so-called ‘Western’ readerships of postcolonial literature, nor prejudge them by Western states’ historic relationship to empire. Reading is highly diverse. Second, it shows that different kinds of reading can each entail ethical and political reflection, and therefore that there may be a variety of ways to participate in postcolonialism. To this end, this chapter shows that we need not demonise domestication – at least not in reading. In dialectical phases with foreignisation, domestication is a means of political self-recognition. Third, it offers a judicious and generous way of engaging with non-professional readings – those readings that take place outside the academy and with limited access to dominant systems to literary/cultural evaluation. By contrast with critics such as Derek Attridge, who largely condemns non-professional readers as exoticists (see 2012, p.243, fn.4), this chapter has recovered the criticality and postcolonial potential of non-professional reading. This validation of reading’s essential variety and of non-professional readings is important in

the next chapter, which evaluates the postcolonial efficacy of non-professional readings of *Harare North*.

4. Non-Understanding in the Reception of Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009)

So far, this thesis has advanced my theoretical model of reading postcolonial literatures (Chapter 1) in order to demonstrate that the process of reading hybridises (Chapter 2). Leading on from this, in their hybridity, individual acts of reading are diverse (Chapter 3). This focus has allowed for an assessment of the viability of reading experiences which contest the material and epistemic legacies of empire. In the process, this thesis has continually complicated the relationship between identity and reading. From an understanding of reading as hybrid and diverse, this chapter moves to consider reading as an act of non-understanding. I place professional and non-professional responses to *Harare North* in conversation in order to highlight their mutual difficulty with, and non-understanding of, the text. Section One focuses on readers' difficulty comprehending (the significance of) the narrative voice. In recognition of the frequency with which readers project the 'Zimbabweanness' or 'Africanness' of the narrative voice, I compare not just professional and non-professional responses, but, within this, African and non-African identitarian responses. Principally, Section One shows that, although readers may seek to authorise their readings by way of their professional or African identity, their mutually diverse and contradictory accounts of the narrative voice make clear that there is not a single, coherent way of interpreting it. All readings are partial, non-understandings of the text. Section Two focuses on readers' difficulty comprehending the narrative plot. By placing a range of professional and non-professional readings in conversation, it highlights the diverse ways in which the story has been understood (as postcolonial), and as a corollary argues that postcolonial reading experiences are premised on limited understanding. On this basis, Section Three proceeds to evaluate the postcolonial

potential of non-professional readings, which explicitly admit the difficulties of reading and readerly non-understanding.

4.1. A Difficult Read

Published by Jonathan Cape in 2009, *Harare North* is Zimbabwean-born author Brian Chikwava's first novel. The text is narrated by an unnamed asylum seeker from Harare, Zimbabwe who arrives in London in order to raise five thousand US dollars – one thousand dollars to repay his uncle for his plane ticket to London, and four thousand dollars to bribe the police back in Zimbabwe to lose the docket that details his murder of Goromonzi, an opposition party supporter. Readers discover early on in the narrative that the anonymous narrator is a former Green Bomber – a member of the National Youth Service, a youth training programme set up in 2001 by the ruling political party Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) under President Robert Mugabe. Though the government maintained that the programme was concerned with supporting internal security, and with inspiring nationalist sentiment amongst Zimbabwean youth, the Green Bombers were “notorious for beating up, torturing, dispersing and killing opposition supporters” (Duri, 2018, p.38). Unrepentant for the murder of Goromonzi, and seeking only to raise enough money to return to Zimbabwe and live there safely, the narrator first stays with his cousin Paul and his cousin's wife Sekai before moving in with his old friend Shingi in a Brixton squat illegally rented by Aleck and also home to Tsitsi and Farayi. Shortly after the narrator reveals to them that he was a Green Bomber in Zimbabwe and that Aleck has been unlawfully charging them rent, Aleck and Farayi leave the squat. Shingi befriends a homeless man called Dave who subsequently moves into the squat with his girlfriend Jenny. It is at this point that the narrator's relationship with

Shingi begins to break down; but it is also when the narrative begins to more forcefully allude to their mutual inhabitation of the same body or to their being the same person.

As Section Two shows, the narrative plot raises its own challenges where reading and the determination of meaning is concerned. But this section focuses on the difficulty of the narrative voice. It places critical readings of *Harare North* in conversation with readings documented on Amazon UK and Goodreads in order to highlight that professional and non-professional readers as well as African and non-African readers possess divergent views about the narrative voice's significance. In so doing, this section establishes the narrative voice as widely difficult to comprehend. Put another way, this section highlights the potential mutuality of non-understanding among professional and non-professional readers alike. In the process, it also dispels assumptions about the relationship between reading and geopolitical location.

In order to comprehend readers' diverse responses to the narrator of *Harare North*, I want to first detail the narrative voice's particular characteristics. In the interests of sincerity, my account of the narrative voice is the product of multiple readings of the novel and is intended to make this chapter accessible to non-readers of *Harare North*. I have the benefit of hindsight. The explanation that follows is not identical with my initial experience of reading. Nor is my reading identical with the experience of others, as we will see. Brian Chikwava has described the narrative voice as "a mixture of Shona/Ndebele idiom translated into English, Zimbabwean contemporary street language/slang and Creole from the Afro-Caribbean" (Dutrion, 2012, np). The first-person narrator also makes some use of chiShona and isiNdebele. chiShona is most common. Examples include: 'mamhepo' meaning 'the winds' (particularly in terms of spirit possession), 'mudzimu' meaning 'wandering spirit', and words denoting familial relations like 'mai' meaning 'mother'. But notable uses of isiNdebele include 'umbuyiso'

meaning a funeral rite in which the spirit is returned to the ancestral home, and ‘umgodoyi’ meaning ‘stray dog’. Siziba implies that the narrator’s translingualism produces an eclectic cosmology that thwarts the identification of his ethnicity, and so prevents us from discerning his associations with the ruling party ZANU-PF given its ethnic and racial coordinates (2017, p.3). However, umbuyiso has a chiShona (Shona language) and vaShona (Shona people/culture) equivalent in ‘Kurova guva’. Additionally, the narrator’s hybrid linguistic and cultural resources may more simply signal his mixed ethnic heritage, an identity he would in any case share with the author who was born to an isiNdebele-speaking mother and chiShona-speaking father (Dutrien, 2012, np). In addition to using multiple languages, and sometimes translating expressions from these languages into English, the narrator also speaks in strange aphorisms (often about truth and its manifestation as a snake or termite), in euphemisms (the use of ‘forgiveness’ to refer to punishment, for example) and idioms whose meaning we must infer. For example, and based on my own deductive reading, we encounter “spin them smooth jazz numbers” meaning ‘lie’ (4); “yari yari yari” meaning ‘prattle’ (8); “boys of the jackal breed” meaning ‘Green Bombers’ (18); and “Mars bars” meaning money (24; 34). The narrative voice also makes use of idiosyncratic similes and metaphors such as “white, ice-cold sun hanging in the sky like frozen pizza base” and “red like ketchup” (1). Finally, the first person at times limits our access to the world of the text in ways that suggest the narrator’s partiality and unreliability.

For Madhu Krishnan, the narrator’s linguistic creativity allows him to “continually evad[e] mastery and aver[t] fossilization in a voice which foregrounds partial becomings over totalizing beings” (2014, p.143). Seeming to evoke Stuart Hall’s influential account of cultural identity “as a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’” (Hall, 1990, p.225), Krishnan suggests that the narrative voice thwarts determinations of

his identity by way of any existing collective identity, be it racial or national for example. However, if we examine readings of *Harare North*, we can observe that even if the idiosyncrasies of the narrative voice seek to prevent readers from overdetermining the narrator's linguistic, ethnic, racial and national associations, readers continue to frame the text by these coordinates. Non-professional readers tend to find the narrative voice challenging, and to link this reading experience to the narrator's Zimbabwean and/or Shona identity. To explain, a quarter of online reviews (eleven out of all forty-four reviews of *Harare North* hosted on Amazon UK and Goodreads) indicate that the narrative voice is difficult, distracting, irritating, or painful to read (A1; A9; A12; A14; A15; G3; G10; G11; G15; G27; G29). They narrate their experiences in similar ways. A15 "found this book quite difficult to read as it is written in 'pidgin' Shona/English." G27 found that "[t]he pidgin English thing was distracting." G29 is also "not sure [they] enjoyed the pigeon/pidgin English." G15 suggests that the "Zimbabwe dialect [...] at times makes sense and at others lost me" and that "[they were] happy to finish it as it is quite [a] difficult read." A1 remarks that Chikwava's "use of the language is difficult to get to grips with." G3 states that "[i]t took [them] several attempts to read this book" because "[they] kept getting mired in the speaker's language". A9 agrees that "the idiosyncratic grammar takes a bit of getting used to", though they find that "it's worth persevering." A12 similarly finds that whilst "[t]he language can be a bit tricky [...] it is still a very good book once you get into it." These readers make a connection between the protagonist's national and ethnic identity, and his linguistic performance of English. Implicitly and explicitly identifying themselves as non-African readers, they find the narrative voice difficult because they experience it as (too) Zimbabwean or (va or chi)Shona.

Importantly, *Harare North*'s paratext may be seen to corroborate these non-professional readers' impressions of the narrative voice as Zimbabwean. Peritextual features like the author's name may imply 'Africanness',¹²¹ while the book cover of the 2010 Vintage edition, which features Brixton scenes emerging from a black man's head, may imply blackness respectively. Epitextual phenomena such as Chikwava's receipt of the Caine Prize for African Writing five years earlier for the short story 'Seventh Street Alchemy' may also encourage the nationalisation and ethnicisation of the narrative insofar as the Caine Prize's underlying pan-Africanism commodifies and consecrates 'Africanness', even as it typically rewards stories of and by African emigrants (Harris, 2014, p.3). The legitimacy of this 'Africanness' is made more fraught by the fact that it is conferred from without Africa by mainly British and US sponsors of the Caine Prize (Pucherová, 2012, p.13), and because "[the prize's] major funding comes from the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, which was founded on Ernest Oppenheimer's money, much of which came from gold and diamond mining" in South Africa and former Rhodesia (Brouillette, 2017). Despite the connections between its value regime and colonial exploitation as well as 'neocolonial' global capitalism – put another way, despite its alienated logic – the Caine Prize nevertheless remains persuasive marker of African value.¹²²

The frequency with which non-professionals find the text difficult, and their tendency to project its difficulty onto its 'Zimbabweanness' or 'Africanness' may be seen to raise questions about the accessibility of postcolonial experiences beyond the academy.

¹²¹ Brouillette and Rogers have both noted that the author name printed on book covers can encourage readers to view texts' and authors' through a lens of racial, ethnical or culturally authenticity (see Brouillette, 2007, pp.65-68; Rogers, 2015, p.87).

¹²² Alienated value systems are not entirely peculiar to African literature. English literature emerges as a result of colonial travel and its textual histories, and its subsequent importation to England. Specifically, it is borne out of early-modern travel writing about colonies such as the Americas (see Armitage, 2001, p.103).

That is to say, if non-professional readers doubt their ability to understand the text and, as a result, augment or fabricate its ‘Africanness’, they may forfeit opportunities for (self-)learning and the renegotiation of cultural knowledges. But, from another vantage point, non-professionals’ frank admissions about their experiences of the text’s difficulty may be viewed as highly-situated material responses that avoid synthesising knowledge about the other in recognition of the limits of the self. Insofar as they express the narrative’s difficulty and claim no authority for themselves, these readers may be enacting particularly postcolonial practices.

Before we deal in more detail with the postcolonial potential of non-professional as well as professional readings of the text, let us linger on perceptions of the book’s ‘Zimbabweanness’ or ‘Africanness’. So far, I have shown that non-African, non-professional readers provide ethnic, national and even continental coordinates for the text. This trend may be seen to confirm that non-African, non-professional readers interact with postcolonial/African literatures in exoticist and orientalist ways, even if their expressed difficulty with *Harare North* acts as a corrective to these pernicious forms of knowledge production. However, experiences of the narrative voice as Zimbabwean or African are not exclusive to non-African, non-professional readers. Thus, the production of the narrator and the text as Zimbabwean/Shona might not consistently operate ‘neocolonially’. To illustrate, Cape Town-based G1 “found the Zimbo-lingo (read pidgin English) irritating”, but surmises that “it all makes sense if you read it as an African listening to an African.....” Ghanaian blogger Nana Fredua-Agyeman praises its depiction of “layman’s English as it is spoken and understood by the majority of non-English speaking folks whose formal education was cut short before they could imbibe the whole grammatical rules” (2012, np). Fredua-Agyeman suggests that the narrator’s voice is a linguistic performance that he recognises. The narrator himself “is not only

believable in his actions but also in his speech and thought” because his language use evokes a marginalised (likely sub-Saharan) demographic (Fredua-Agyeman, 2012, np). It is not just African, non-professional readers who make a connection between the narrator’s voice and sub-Saharan Africa or Zimbabwe either. Writer and literary critic Koye Oyedeki asserts that Chikwava provides the narrator with “an authentic provincial Zimbabwean voice by having him speak in a broken pidgin English that is both sharp and biting in places” (2013, p.49). “The broken English”, he continues, “is a legacy of the imperial influence, a hybrid, which Chikwava brings back to its ‘roots’ in order to engage in a cultural conversation” (Oyedeki, 2013, p.49). Likewise, in a recent article for the *Journal of the African Literature Association*, Zimbabwean critic Yuleth Chigwedere suggests that the narrator makes use of a “Zimbabwean-flavoured English” that combines chiShona and isiNdebele lexis, syntax and morphology (2017, p.171).¹²³ Though “this hybrid linguistic code” is invented by Chikwava, she argues that “it is easily recognizable by the native speakers of Zimbabwe” (Chigwedere, 2017, p.172). She adds that some aspects of the narrative such as the “me, I” subject form, “may make for some heavy reading on the part of the non-native Shona speaker, as the narrative may be difficult to comprehend and require a lot of concentration” (Chigwedere, 2017, p.172). For Chigwedere, *Harare North* is for Zimbabweans.

Both African and non-African readers appear to agree that *Harare North*’s narrative voice is characteristically Zimbabwean. While non-African readers locate this

¹²³ Some of her rationale for identifying the narrator as an isiNdebele speaker is dubious. To offer just one example, Chigwedere claims that Chikwava “completely distorts the word ‘little’ into ‘likkle’ when he writes about Sekai’s ‘likkle sausage dog’ (13) that she keeps in the apartment in order to reflect the Ndebele mother-tongue influence in the pronunciation of the word” (Chigwedere, 2017, p.171). Though I agree that ‘likkle’ seems to function as an approximation of the phonemes in standard orthography, Chigwedere ignores that ‘likkle’ is a common regional pronunciation of ‘little’ in England. It thus may not reflect the influence of isiNdebele but the influence of South London on the narrator. Furthermore, neither the spelling nor the pronunciation “completely distor[t]” the word: the spelling exchanges the double ‘t’ for a double ‘k’; the pronunciation merely moves the middle consonant to a different place of articulation.

as a source of difficulty, distraction and unfamiliarity, African readers praise the text's mimesis and find that its voice resonates acutely with African linguistic performances. There is by no means a consensus among African readers about the text's 'Zimbabweanness' or 'Africanness', however. Some non-professional readers who identify themselves as Zimbabwean and who lay claim to interpretive authority through their associations with Zimbabwe find the narrative voice difficult precisely because the narrator's connections to Zimbabwe are dubious. They call attention to the unexpected absence of 'Zimbabweanness'. In so doing, these particular non-professional, Zimbabwean readers make clear the partiality of the professional and non-professional, African readers' responses documented above. Continental or national identity does not determine reading. To focus on these non-professional, Zimbabwean readers' actual responses, they have difficulty with the novel because they find the narrator's linguistic idiosyncrasies deceptive. They worry that the novel's staged voice may perpetuate prejudices and misinformation about the linguistic competencies of Zimbabweans. For example, G10, who indicates in their review that they "w[ere] born and grew up in Harare", "found the author's writing style painful to read [... and] wouldn't recommend this to anyone." G11, who identifies themselves as Zimbabwean in a comment on G10's review, agrees. In their own review, they suggest: "The language used by the author was painful if not annoying. I have never heard of this language in Zimbabwe or outside. This really put me off as the portrayal I feel is not representative of how Zimbabweans speak." A14 concurs with G10 and G11, writing:

[I]t was very difficult to read the ungrammatical English the author insisted on using throughout the story. The story unfolds mostly in a stream of consciousness from the protagonist. If he was semi literate, as portrayed, then surely this internal dialogue would have been in Shona (translated into grammatical English by the author since the novel is in English) and not the painful ungrammatical English which noone in real life would use to think when they have

their own first language to use to speak to themselves? This is so unrealistic it is quite annoying. Who is Brian writing for anyway because even in Zimbabwe, those who would buy this book are fluent in English and would find it difficult to read this one. Certainly, those learning to be fluent in English would regress after reading it! If he is writing for a non Zimbabwean audience elsewhere, then he has given the wrong impression of the competence of Zimbabweans in the diaspora to use English, in speech or thought, grammatically, which is a false impression as most Zimbabweans are very fluent in English, our national second language.

For A14, insofar as it is intended to convey the inner thoughts of the Zimbabwean narrator, the narrative voice ought to be written in his native language Shona (to be a more ‘realistic’ portrayal of his consciousness, to use their terms). Otherwise, it should be translated into ‘standard’ English (to fulfil their notion of an English novel). They argue that the novel is not intended for a Zimbabwean readership because that readership is literate in English. However, they also express concerns about its consumption by non-Zimbabweans, worrying that its narrative voice misrepresents the English-language competencies of Zimbabweans in degrading ways. Here, we see clearly that “a faith in realism [or, a more materialist strategy of reading] does not necessarily reproduce the status quo but can also be used to question and even contest it” (Procter and Benwell, 2014, p.176). A14 reads *Harare North* through a lens of reality and authenticity in order to draw attention to the relative ‘fakeness’ of the narrative voice and even the author, Brian Chikwava. On Amazon UK, it is possible to up-vote customer reviews. Thirteen people have clicked to indicate that they found A14’s review of *Harare North* helpful, the most up-votes awarded to any single review of the novel. Clearly, then, A14 is not alone in their materialist response to the text, nor in their frustration with the text’s falling short of realism.

As we have seen, readers online frequently describe the narrator’s linguistic performance as “pigeon/pidgin”, “Zimbo-lingo” and “Zimbabwe dialect”, as well as

“painful”, “distracting” and “irritating”. This seems to confirm A14 and assenting respondents’ concerns that non-Zimbabwean readers will mistake the narrator’s linguistic performance as characteristically Zimbabwean, and may ridicule it on that basis. Yet, Fredua-Agyeman and Chigwedere also describe the narrative voice as Zimbabwean and evoke their own African identities in order to validate their readings. On this basis, it is difficult to agree with critics such as Isaac Ndlovu who find that the text’s strategic exoticism and the narrator’s ‘broken English’ successfully “satiriz[e] certain tendencies of [Chikwava’s] neoliberal and neo-colonial readership” (Ndlovu, 2016, pp.29-30). First, though non-professional, Zimbabwean readers agree that exoticism is at work in the narrative voice, their reviews, taken together with non-professional, non-African readings of the narrative voice as Zimbabwean, testify to the ways in which the text fails to undercut cultural biases, and the danger that mimicry turns into masquerade. Second, the ‘broken English’ is experienced as Zimbabwean not only by a “neoliberal and neo-colonial readership”, which Ndlovu interchangeably describes as simply “Western” (2016, p.31), but also by also African readers.

In conclusion, professional and non-professional readers’, and African and non-African readers’ diverse accounts of the narrative voice suggest that readers widely experience the narrative voice as difficult. Notwithstanding readers’ claims to authority through their professional or African identities, the diversity of professional readings and African readings alike demonstrates that all readings are partial, non-understandings of the text. In the process of highlighting that non-understanding is a feature of reading, this section has importantly contested assumptions about both non-African and African readers. It has shown that non-African readers do not simply indulge in an exotic production and consumption of Africa in the text because of the social and cultural exchange value of African literature in European and North American marketplaces, as

Madhu Krishnan seeks to suggest (2014, pp.146-147). Indeed, some non-African, non-professional readers in this case prove themselves to be highly self-conscious, particularly of the limitations of their readings. It has also shown that there is by no means an ‘African’ way of reading. African readers’ evocations of their locations can in this sense be misleading. As Benwell, Procter and Robinson find, though readers frequently plot a causal relationship between their locations and interpretations, and seek to derive interpretive authority through proximity to the ‘local’ context (2012a, p.45), this tendency obscures the diversity of reading and the extent to which we come to possess “*reading identities*” which are related to, but ultimately exceed geopolitical coordinates (2012a, p.50; original emphasis).

4.2. Losing the Plot

Having shown that non-understanding is endemic among readers’ conceptions of *Harare North*’s narrative voice, this section proceeds to highlight readers’ diverse interpretations of the text’s narrative plot. It places a range of professional and non-professional responses to the novel in dialogue in the spirit of a book club. It makes the case that, given their diversity and mutual incompatibility, each of these readings must be understood as forms of non-understanding. By tracking the material and textual implications of these readings, I show that non-understanding is not antithetical to the postcolonial. Non-understanding precisely provides readers access to forms of self-recognition which testify to empire’s legacies of inequality, and access to forms of self-reconstitution that anticipate a more equitable future.

First, let us observe headline critical responses to *Harare North*. Since its publication, the novel has been variously praised by postcolonial critics for bringing to

light the “systemic exploitation of migrants” (McCann, 2014, p.75) and the “planned” violence of London (Boehmer and Davies, 2015, p.397), for “highlighting the contingency of racial becomings” (Krishnan, 2014, p.46), for bearing witness to a traumatised “diasporic consciousness” (Chigwedere, 2017, p.170), and for withholding a diagnosis of African peoples’ experiences of psychical crises of self (Gunning, 2015). These positions present the novel as transparent and postcolonial in the sense that it draws attention to and contests the cultural, material and epistemic legacies of empire. Yet, professional critics’ confident celebrations of the narrative’s significance belie the diverse, mutually incompatible interpretations of the novel underpinning their readings. As this section goes on to demonstrate, readings which foreground the novel’s biopolitical implications are premised on reading the narrator and Shingi as two distinct characters. Only then can these characters register the systematic exploitation of migrants. Non-professionals more readily admit their confusion and uncertainty, but the different conceptions of the novel’s plot among professional readers demonstrate that the novel is more widely experienced as perplexing. By taxonomising professional and non-professional responses to the text according to readers’ co-production of the narrator and Shingi, I demonstrate the multiple (and necessarily limited) ways in which *Harare North* has been read. This enables us to register the different, partial ways in which readers operate postcolonial sensibilities. It also legitimises non-professional readers’ limited understanding and difficulty reading the text, by showing that limited understanding and difficulty are fundamental qualities of postcolonial reading experiences.

Identifying readers’ divergent perceptions of the narrative plot based on their online reviews poses its own challenges. On Amazon UK and Goodreads, users are not obliged to comply with a particular review format. They may write freely about any given book providing that they are relevant, and they do not engage in hate speech, libel or self-

promotion.¹²⁴ Users are encouraged on both platforms to be evaluative. However, whether they liked or disliked, or had a particular emotional response to a novel often does not tell us very much about how they understood the story. In short, some reviews are acutely revealing about readers' experience of the narrative while others are more ambiguous, and still others are utterly opaque (one Amazon UK review in the data set appraises the delivery process rather than the product (A13)). In addition, because Goodreads and Amazon UK operate as forums in which users can "perform their identities as readers in a public and networked forum" (Nakamura, 2013, p.240) as well as demonstrate and achieve cultural capital (Rehberg Sedo, 2011, pp.108-110), online book reviews may be motivated less by a desire to portray one's feelings about a given text than to meet social goals around belonging and expertise.

It is also very difficult to establish the ways that literary critics differently co-produce the text's plot. The idealised form of literary criticism in some ways renders its actual reading invisible. In the service of literary analysis, professional readers often rearrange and re-story the texts they read (see Felski, 2015, p.88). If reading induces a confusion between finding and creating meaning, critique systematically creates new meanings in order to grant practitioners the privilege of finding them (Felski, 2015, pp.88-89). Crucially, these created meanings are pre-approved as sufficiently disaffected and critical. Professional readers are loss averse. They seek to diminish negative affects (such as sadness, anger, fear disgust and guilt or shame), even if that means avoiding affects entirely (Sedgwick, 2002, p.136). I deal in more detail with the specificities of professional reading in Section Three. But the important point here is that literary critics tend to implicitly understand texts as risky affective investments, whose narrative

¹²⁴ Full terms and conditions of reviews are available on Goodreads.com ('Review Guidelines'), and Amazon.co.uk ('Customer Reviews').

structures can beguile critics and cause them to activate affects with unknowable, and potentially problematic trajectories. Postcolonial critics know too well that participation in sadness, for example, may take as a corollary damaging empathetic identifications or even white saviourism. Hence, the onus on critics to evidence their anticipation of such affects. In order to do so, they do not just maintain a controlled distance from texts, but draw in paratextual and extratextual histories, and actively reassemble textual features in the production of new stories. In short, professional reading is both anticipatory, in that it pre-emptively wards off (negative) affects, and belated, in that it is non-identical with the acts of reading that produce it.

The particular forms and aims of online non-professional readers and professional readers show clearly that both reading communities inhibit access to their notions of narrative plot. Non-professional readers, as identified online, are often evaluative and sometimes provide insufficient information from which to derive their sense of texts' stories. Professional readers both anticipate and reconstruct their actual readings in literary analyses, which often repel narrative plot. My analysis of readers' sense of *Harare North*'s plot is therefore necessarily partial. It describes readers' performances of reading within the confines of their chosen form.

In order to make the diversity of interpretations manageable, I organise readings into three main interpretive theses: (1) the narrator and Shingi are different characters, who suffer in varying degrees the systematic exploitation faced by migrants; (2) the narrator becomes mentally ill or possessed and ultimately transforms into Shingi, or vice versa; and (3) the narrator and Shingi are two embodiments of a single traumatised self, whose condition can be severally localised in a troubled migration, an experience in prison, and a childhood spent in the Zimbabwe youth militia. These readings might be described as realist, diagnostic, and revelatory respectively. Admittedly, these

interpretive categories are nonexhaustive, and readings that belong to a particular category are disparate in focus, approach and purpose. My categorisation of readings nevertheless remains useful for capturing some of the interpretive heterogeneity around *Harare North*, and therefore for further characterising the novel as challenging among professionals and non-professionals alike. Taking each of the three most common interpretations in turn, I identify how each relies on readers prioritising and differently co-producing textual and material aspects of the novel. The purpose of doing so is to show that experiences of the text as difficult are common among all readers, and that ensuing limited experiences of the text need not necessarily limit the postcolonial potential of the reading experience.

4.2.a. Realism: The Narrator and Shingi are Different Characters

Our first reading community perceives the narrator and Shingi as different characters. These readers are most frequently performing (social) realist readings of the novel. The ubiquity of such readings may be attributed to literary culture's abiding bias for the human and the person, from postcolonial literary studies' enduring interest in authorial identity¹²⁵ to book clubs' focus on characters and authorial intention. Realist readings generally prioritise what is explicitly narrated and tend to co-produce plot developments materially. The reading self brings to the self-in-the-world's attention a range of phenomena in the text such as the narrator's unlawful asylum claim, the overcrowded and unsanitary squat in which the main characters live, their degrading search for employment and food as well as the frequency with which they are intoxicated. In part motivated by references to London, Gatwick Airport, Brixton and Zimbabwe, the self-in-the-world is compelled to

¹²⁵ On the complex genealogy of literary studies' underlying humanism more broadly, see Graff (1987, pp.1-15).

produce these intratextual referents materially as, for example, the illegal entry of asylum seekers and work-related offences, the insecurities and psychological hardships faced by migrants – especially those who are undocumented – as well as their invisibility to the state. As I demonstrate with reference to key episodes in *Harare North*, these are immanently limited readings of the novel. But these limited readings are nevertheless postcolonial, in the sense that they allow readers to engage with the injustices of migration and asylum and, in acts of self-reconstitution, to express transnational and transcultural solidarities with those subjected to the United Kingdom's hostile immigration policy.

Let us look at some of these realist readings in more detail in order to highlight their postcolonial potential and, notwithstanding, their interpretive limitations. In an essay on the politics of asylum and embodied insecurity, Patricia Noxolo speaks of Shingi discretely as a drug addict and as the victim of violent crime, and of the narrator sending money to Shingi's relatives (Noxolo, 2014, p.303). In reading terms, her reading self pays ethical attention to descriptions of Shingi's use of strong strains of cannabis and heroin and his inhibited state as well as the reported attack on Shingi, which the self-in-the-world materially co-produces as the political realities of refugees. This a credible reading of *Harare North*'s plot, and one that allows Noxolo to consider the politics of refugeedom as it entails both economic and bodily precarity, and to think ethically about the tensions between refugees and representation. But it is also a limited reading of the text, particularly insofar as it presumes the narrator's reliability. Other characters and narrative details contest the narrator's distinction between himself and Shingi. Realist readings such as Noxolo's struggle to account for the conversations that take place around Shingi's drug abuse, particularly those in which Jenny diagnoses Shingi with dissociative identity disorder because he talks to himself and refers to himself in the third person (see 162-169). If the reading self even temporarily aligns with Jenny's vantage point, it may return

to the self-in-the-world and inspire it to revise its previous reading of the narrator and Shingi as distinct characters. On this reading, Shingi would not be the only one abusing drugs. Indeed, if Jenny's intervening claim – and the reading self and the self-in-the-world's co-processing of it – inspires the reading self to pay closer attention to instances when Shingi and the narrator speak, it may find a number of instances that support the implications of Jenny's diagnosis. For example, the frequency with which speech marks are omitted from Shingi's speech has the effect of incorporating it within the narrator's stream-of-consciousness narration (see 79, 114, 140, 167, 169; see also 121, although here he seems listened to). On one occasion, speech marks are omitted from the narrator's lecturing of Shingi; on the same page, Jenny asks why Shingi is talking to himself (see 175). At times the narrator and Shingi also exchange conversational styles. If readers have come to associate Shingi with a stutter and the narrator with a confidence – even arrogance – it is significant that, on occasion, the narrator stutters (116) and Shingi does not stutter at all (162). Finally, the novel also features incomplete sets of speech marks, seemingly around Shingi's speech (see 135 and 150). It is unlikely that these are misprints given that they appear in both the 2010 Vintage edition and the 2009 Johnathan Cape edition of the novel. In any case, these elliptical grammatical features may generate a perplexing reading experience. They make it increasingly difficult to discern where the narrator's consciousness ends and Shingi's begins.

Noxolo's view that the narrator sends money to Shingi's relatives, moreover, relies on ignoring narrative and formal hints that the narrator and Shingi have the same relatives. To explain, it is said that an uncle bought both of their plane tickets to England (see 18 and 106). Although Shingi's uncle is referred to as 'Uncle Sinyoro' and the narrator's as simply 'uncle', the uncles perform parallel actions: both require recompense, both call and write letters, and of course the narrator indiscriminately repays, speaks and

writes to both. Some readers may allow the latter circumstances to be explained away by the narrator's financial responsibility for Shingi, his possession of Shingi's mobile phone, and Shingi's absence in the final third of the novel. But others may process the two uncles' analogous behaviours and their co-presence in the narrator's life as indicative of the narrator and Shingi's mutuality. Allusions that the narrator and Shingi may also share a maternal figure support this reading. Both the narrator's mother and Shingi's mother have died. MaiShingi is actually Shingi's maternal aunt. Throughout the narrative, almost like a refrain, the narrator is confronted with news about the destruction of his Mother's village. Yet in the opening to the pivotal chapter, Chapter 29, which is abridged for the prologue, it is Shingi's mother's village which is under threat.

Another letter for Shingi arrive from MaiShingi. She bawl that the government have send bulldozers to demolish people's houses and they new four-room house have been demolished in second wave of *Operation Murambatsvina*. Now many people become homeless, Zimbabwe is no more she cry. (204)

It is significant that we learn of the fate of MaiShingi's village because the narrator reads a letter "for Shingi". The narrative parallelism solicits suspicions that MaiShingi may be (the narrator's) mother, while the framing also keeps in play the rational, realist explanation that the narrator is very much an unintended addressee of MaiShingi's letter. Readers may quell this ambiguity through a recognition of the differences between the two stories of MaiShingi and Mother's village(s). A range of characters attribute the forced removal of people from Mother's village and its destruction to the ZANU-PF government's desire to mine the precious stones below ground, a plot point that for some may be "chillingly reminiscent of the discovery of the Chiyadzwa diamond fields by the Zimbabwean government in late 2006 in Marange" (Musanga, 2017, p.785). The demolition of housing and the resultant displacement of MaiShingi and other villagers, by contrast, happens under *Operation Murambatsvina* according to her letter. Officially

known as Operation Restore Order, *Operation Murambatsvina* was a government campaign ostensibly geared toward establishing a more formal economy and replacing ‘illegal’ housing solutions with lawful dwellings (Potts, 2006, p.274).¹²⁶ The government legitimised the campaign by presenting ‘illegality’ as a public health issue. ‘Illegal’ activity was constructed as unclean, a disease that must be contained lest it contaminate the country (Harris, 2008, pp.45-46; see also Muchemwa, 2010, pp.136-137). *Murambatsvina* itself is a portmanteau of ‘muramba’ and ‘tsvina’, meaning ‘clean up the filth’ (Harris, 2008, p.40). It is estimated that, by July 2005, between 650,000 and 700,000 people had lost their homes, their livelihoods, or both. The dismantling of informal economies also impacted legal trade, pushing the population affected by Operation *Murambatsvina* to 2.4 million people or around a fifth of Zimbabweans (Harris, 2008, p.276).

Selves-in-the-world without prior knowledge of Operation *Murambatsvina* may assimilate emerald and diamond mining within its aims or consequences; thus, their reading selves create correspondences between the fate of Mother and MaiShingi. Informed selves-in-the-world may also identify possible similarities between the stories of village demolition to the extent that Operation *Murambatsvina* indirectly led to increased mining. To explain, the campaign was motivated by a failing economy and the need to attract foreign capital. It supported the government’s ‘Look East’ policy (2003), an initiative aimed at strengthening political and economic ties with the People’s Republic of China, by removing competition and creating new opportunities for investment (Slaughter, 2005). Since 2006, the People’s Republic of China has invested in diamond

¹²⁶ ‘Illegal’ appears in inverted commas here both because ZANU-PF also destroyed legal dwellings, and because ‘illegality’ in practice meant “the contravention of a host of by-laws, inherited from a racist, colonial state and based in large part upon planning practices premised on a well-resourced urban government and central state and an urban population in reasonably remunerated jobs, and a welfare state to provide for those without” (Potts, 2006, p.291).

mining in a joint venture between the Chinese firm Anhui, the state-owned Zimbabwe Mining Development Company, and the military (Mano, 2016, p.164) (the venture is often now referred to as Anjin). Private and state-owned businesses in the People's Republic of China continue to target investment in mining, agricultural and manufacturing industries, to the tune of billions of dollars each year (see Chun, 2014, p.19). Readers may therefore produce mining initiatives as symptoms of Operation Murambatsvina, and thus comprehend the destruction of MaiShingi's village under Operation Murambatsvina as the very same destruction of Mother's village for the exploitation of gemstone mining opportunities. It is therefore possible to read MaiShingi and Mother as one in the same, and therefore to also understand the narrator and Shingi as one in the same character.

Let us move on to consider how other readers have produced the narrator and Shingi as different characters, to explore their ethical and/or political potential, and, notwithstanding, their partiality. Both Muchemwa and Siziba maintain a distinction between the narrator and Shingi, arguing that the narrator's theft of Shingi's identity (in the form of his passport, national insurance number and mobile phone) is a survival strategy among those who are deprived of legal recognition (Muchemwa, 2010, p.142; Siziba, 2017, pp.6-7). These realist readings principally activate a politics of reading, whereby the text becomes an interface through which to recognise the twice-marginalisation of Zimbabwean emigrants (Siziba, 2017), and what is lost and gained during migration (Muchemwa, 2010). But they are also forms of non-understanding. They depend on the reading self trusting the narrator's account that he is undocumented while Shingi is documented, and on the self-in-the-world manifesting their migration status in the world so that the narrator's exclusion and, consequently, his use of Shingi's legal documents comes to represent the legal and social exclusions faced by undocumented

migrants more broadly. But the reading self may recognise formal and thematic allusions to the characters' shared embodiment, and therefore entertain the possibility that the narrator's act of identity theft might not be theft at all. For example, not only are the narrator's and Shingi's ways of speaking often confused, but additionally there are corresponding descriptions of the narrator and Shingi's physical appearance such as the fact that they both wear glasses with a distinctive crack in the left lens (see 35 and 229). Furthermore, when the narrator reveals to Aleck that he has successfully found employment at Tim's Fish Bar as a result of using Shingi's passport, Aleck seems to question *Shingi's* sanity.

When I tell him the news he only say, 'Hmmm.' There is small trace of big reasoning on his face. He lean again the door, look at Shingi and start to crack his jokes again, asking if original native and his winds able to take pressure of London. (80)

Aleck appears troubled by the narrator's use of Shingi's passport, but he proceeds to tease Shingi, suggesting (as on the previous page) that he is afflicted by the winds or *mamhepo*. The reading self may simply take Aleck to be lost for words regarding the narrator's behaviour, particularly if the self-in-the-world extrapolates the consequences of identity fraud in the world to the text world and resultantly projects Aleck's concern. On this reading, Aleck defaults to poking fun at Shingi as a way of avoiding fears about the narrator's illegal behaviour. Yet another reading is possible here if the reading self seeks to reconcile more robustly the narrator's news with Aleck's apparent non-sequitur. It is possible that the narrator's use of Shingi's passport is strange to Aleck – a symptom of Shingi's winds – precisely because the narrator is embodied as Shingi and therefore appears to be using his own passport as if it was someone else's. The reading self may therefore perceive the narrator as the winds that possess Shingi. The narrator is described as *mamhepo* at various moments in the novel, lending viability to this interpretation. For example, "Sekai think that me I am *mamhepo* – the winds; them bad spirits" (21). This

reading is of course one of many. As Dave Gunning has highlighted, it is also possible to read Shingi as mamhepo, or the narrator and Shingi as conflicting identities of a person suffering with dissociative identity disorder (see Gunning, 2015, pp.127-130). The narrator may also merely repress his identity as Shingi and the legal security this ought to entail because it does not express his lived reality in London (see Oyedele, 2013, p.49). What is important is that an understanding of Shingi and the narrator as distinct, purely based on the narrator's theft of Shingi's passport, is a partial reading of the text.

There are alternative routes to a realist reading in which the narrator and Shingi are distinct. G15 draws attention to the characters' inhabitation of an overcrowded squat. They summarise the story as follows:

Set in Brixton in areas I know, lived a group of African illiegal immigrants. Two were from Zimbabwe another was a woman with a baby. All lived in an awful, rat infested squat and tried to make a life together. It gave a good insight into the struggles of finding 'graft' and living hand to mouth. The discovery of the food bin behind Marks and Spencers led to violence. [...] Overall at interesting enough insight into another world in Brixton and the harsh realities of surviving in an alien world, in territory I am familar with.

G15 differentiates between the narrator and Shingi (as two Zimbabweans).¹²⁷ Their ethical attention to the narrative's representation of the characters' legal and socioeconomic difficulties provides them with access to a politics of reading. They recognise "the struggles of finding 'graft' and living hand to mouth", and they co-recognise their own privileges. The characters' Brixton is "alien" and not at all identical with the Brixton with which this reader is "familiar". In reading terms, their reading self is guided by the text toward a re-presentation of Brixton, which the self-in-the-world subsequently reconciles *as irreconcilable* with its prior knowledge and experience of

¹²⁷ It is likely that Aleck is also Zimbabwean; before the narrator finds out that Aleck is the father of Tsitsi's baby, he implies that Aleck stands out among Zimbabweans in London for looking after Tsitsi (35).

Brixton – but no less ‘real’. In simple terms, this reader learns that what they understand about Brixton is limited and linked to their identity as not-African, and not an illegal immigrant.

This reading may provide G15 with a new awareness of the politics of space, but it also relies on a partial understanding of the text. Specifically, G15 must experience the Brixton squat and its characters as referential, textual constructions with material counterparts. However, it is not always clear that the narrator and Shingi are discrete characters, or that the squat exists. The house is often described as looking like Shingi’s head (see 29, 55, 76, 136, 140). Some readers may wonder whether Shingi’s head is the ‘real’ stage for the novel’s unfolding drama. If the reading self doubts the material existence of the squat in the text (except as Shingi’s head), the self-in-the-world may furnish the reading self’s doubt with conceptions of psychosis and madness.

Let us dedicate attention to the sustained representation of the house as a head in order to develop our understanding of other possible readings of the Brixton squat and its inhabitants. According to a short fantasy in which the narrator imagines that the funeral of the narrator’s mother has taken place and she has been reembodied and returned to the village, the imagery of the house as a head originates with the narrator’s mother: “*Your house is like your head, she say to sheself, you have to keep sweeping it clean it you want to say sane. She like to say that*” (14; original emphasis). The narrator may imagine the expression’s maternal origins, but the metaphor nonetheless recurs throughout the novel, as in the following excerpt:

We need to clean our house. We have to sweep the floors because they is full of dirt and it’s hard to think straight inside this house, Shingi say now. You need to clean the inside of your head, I don’t say. (76)

In what might be recognised as an allusion to fellow Zimbabwean writer Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978),¹²⁸ the narrator develops an association between the house and the head, and between dirt and confusion or madness. For some readers, this may be experienced as nothing more than pathetic fallacy wherein the state of the house comes to speak for the state of the head or Shingi's mental wellbeing. The reading self comes to recognise both the house and the head as disorderly – for which the self-in-the-world provides a spiritual or medical schema – and, suspending disbelief, obliges the house's condition to speak for Shingi's condition. Other readers may attach significance to the second person possessive pronoun in Shingi's reported speech; from a co-production of the house as “our[s]” – the narrator and Shingi's – the reading self may be prompted by the parallel imagery to co-produce the head as ours with the effect of allegorising the house as not just Shingi's head, but the narrator's too. Given that the novel sustains and extends the metaphor of the house as a head, and encourages the self-in-the-world to supply in-the-world referents that have to do with the self or the psyche, some readers may co-produce the house and even the text world more broadly as (the insides of) a head. Zoë Wicomb agrees that “the simile [of the house as the head] multiplies in metonymic currency” to such a degree that its appearance begins to “distur[b] the facticity of the scene[s]” in which it appears (2016, p.63). On this reading, descriptions of the house as a head and vice versa are not primarily experienced as analogies, but are taken literally to mean that narrative action takes place with an imaginative realm: the head of Shingi (and perhaps also the narrator).

The narrative trope of headaches substantiates this reading, inviting us to reconsider distinctions between the narrator and Shingi, and to rethink the relationship

¹²⁸ Early in *The House of Hunger*, Marechera depicts “[o]ne's mind” as a series of “grimy rooms”, which are covered in dust and infested with “insects of thought” (Marechera, 2013, p.14).

between the Brixton squat described in the text and the reality of Brixton in the world. At different points in the novel, the narrator, Shingi and the house are each described as headaches or as suffering with headaches. Shingi is most frequently described as afflicted by headaches. “Shingi in headache kind of mood” (125); “Shingi don’t like straight talk so he go into headache mood again and do his disappearing thing” (126); “Shingi have come late from graft that evening and refuse to cook saying he is not hungry and that he have headache” (168); “Jenny start asking if he [Shingi] have headache again” (175). The narrator, meanwhile, reflects on himself as a headache: “He [Shingi] is quiet and it’s like I am big headache for him” (133). If we have come to associate Shingi with headaches, the narrator’s identification as a headache may encourage us to perceive the narrator as an affliction. The self-in-the-world may supply a variety of explanatory frameworks to account for this. The text itself provides two models: the narrator is mamhepo and possesses Shingi, or the narrator is one of Shingi’s personalities. Yet, and as Dave Gunning has noticed, the text continually disputes both epistemic schemas and thwarts the correct identification of the self and the other (2015, p.129-130). To continue our reading, the narrator is not plainly a headache, nor is Shingi always the afflicted. In the prologue, the narrator inverts notions of Shingi as the originary self, insisting that “he [Shingi] had now turn into big headache for me” (1). The narrative thus refuses to lend credibility to either the narrator or Shingi’s accounts. Reading selves who appreciate the characters’ mutual affliction with headaches throughout the narrative may be moved to blur the boundaries of their embodiment and comprehend them as sharing a head. In fact, reading selves who are primed to read the narrator and Shingi as continuous may appreciate the way they seem to share a nervous system in the prologue alone. The passage first describes Shingi as “like many immigrant on whose face fate had drive one large peg and hang tall stores” (1); however, a “wry reversal” has it that “the narrator’s

head is now the one feeling the pain” (Noxolo, 2014, p.300). Noxolo does not attach particular significance to this reversal, but the gruesome imagery of a peg forced into Shingi’s face may inspire the reading self (based on the self-in-the-world’s understanding of how pain works) to project Shingi’s pain, only to find itself confronted with ‘my’ pain. The reading self will likely attach ‘my’ pain to a first-person narrator rather than to itself or the self-in-the-world owing to the narrative voice’s singularity and the specificity of its account. But there is a confusion of the narrator and Shingi here that, if perceived, readers will find sustained and continually complicated over the course of their reading.

When the narrator later describes the house as experiencing headache – “our house is having big headache” (170) – readers may be moved to experience the two characters’ interchangeability as further interchangeable with the house. The extent to which Shingi, the narrator and the house all suffer with headaches invites the reading self to co-produce their reality and so to complicate prior conceptions of the narrative’s reality in Brixton. If the narrator and Shingi both experience headaches (and may therefore be interpreted as sharing a head), and the house also suffers with headaches, readers may suddenly find the house’s reality in the text as well as its relationship to Brixton in the world suspect. Headache’s multiplying subjects encourage the reading self to co-produce all three referents, inspiring the reading self and the self-in-the-world to speculate together whether the novel’s spatio-temporal referent is really a Brixton squat at all and not the imaginary of an imagined person. Extended metaphors of the head as a disorderly house, together with depictions of the narrator’s erratic behaviour (his obsession and denial of truth, for example, and his compulsive cleaning) support this reading, encouraging the self-in-the-world to perceive headache as a symptom of psychical or spiritual disruption and the text as a product of such a crisis.

Additionally, in one episode, the narrator suggests that the house has a few screws loose: “I get my screwdriver and start tightening loose screws on them old computers and whistling to myself thinking how there must also be a lot of loose things inside this house” (130). The evocation of loose screws, together with the indication that loose things occupy the house more generally, may for readers, whose selves-in-the-world are familiar with the idiomatic expression, allegorise the narrator’s unmoored psyche. Indeed, the idiomaticity of ‘loose’ – not only as in the expression ‘a screw loose’, but also in ‘on the loose’ and ‘loose lips’ – allow for a range of diagnostic and revelatory readings. For example, if ‘loose’ in the narrative conjures ‘on the loose’, we may wonder about the household’s fugitive mobilities and perhaps be reminded of characters’ descriptions of the narrator as *mamhepo*. If ‘loose’ in the narrative conjures ‘loose lips’, we may be moved to consider the household’s secrets and the perils of truth, themes to which the narrator continually returns in analogies about truth as snake (8), as a termite (see 101, 119-124), and as a granite rock (183). A realist reading is difficult to sustain when the narrator perpetually figures truth as an impossibility. Moreover, if we materialise the house as a head, we may locate this allegorical level within a larger organising structure, *Shingi*/the narrator’s psyche. Readers might be encouraged to question whether what they likely process as pertaining to the material, between which the narrator threads imaginative connections, is also imagined. It becomes difficult not only to materialise referents like *Shingi* as a documented migrant, the narrator as an undocumented migrant and former Green Bomber, Jenny as a caricature of white hippiedom, and the house as representative of the kinds of accommodation available for undocumented migrants in London, but also to materialise them as ‘real’ within the narrative at all. It is possible to read these referents (*Shingi*, the narrator, Jenny etc.) as imaginary within the imaginary

(or psyche) of an imaginary character (Shingi/the narrator), whose story (*Harare North*) is itself imagined.

Readers of the 2010 Vintage edition may be more likely to view the story as taking place within Shingi/the narrator's head or imagination given that the front cover displays different Brixton scenes emerging from a black man's head. But alternative readings of the book's cover are possible. The cover also invites readers to evoke Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger* (1978), particularly Heinemann African Writers Series' edition of the short story collection which similarly features a head from which grows a small tree. Readers who pursue the narrative's associations with Marechera and his work will be multiply rewarded. We have already observed that *Harare North* and *The House of Hunger* both deploy imagery of a dust that lines the floor of the head. But Marechera shares with the fictional narrator of *Harare North* a history a squatting and alcohol abuse. Marechera is also known for contesting notions of a stable, 'authentic' self, both in his work and public performances of self (see Buuck, 1997; Nicholls, 2013), a tendency which aligns the author with *Harare North*'s narrator. It is thus plausible to read *Harare North* as a fictionalised re-telling of Marechera's own highly fictionalised life.

4.2.b. Diagnosis: The Narrator becomes Shingi, or Shingi becomes the Narrator

Our second reading community perceives that the narrator becomes Shingi or vice versa. These readers tend to privilege a diagnostic form of reading through which, applying different explanatory models, they identify symptoms of the protagonist's unusual selfhood and seek to locate traumatic causes. In this sense, they tend toward, and express faith in, what Paul Ricoeur called the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. Diagnosticians engage in reading practices which "combine, in differing ways, an attitude of vigilance,

detachment, and wariness (*suspicion*) with identifiable conventions of commentary (*hermeneutics*)” (Felski, 2015, p.3). This reading community is largely made up of professional readers, as may be expected given the dominance and authority of the hermeneutics of suspicion and associated reading practices in the humanities (see Felski, 2015, p.2). Through different diagnostic dispositions, these professional readers gain opportunities to engage politically with the personhood of refugees and asylum seekers, and sometimes to ethically reflect on the tensions between language and explanatory models on one hand, and refugee and asylum seekers’ expressions of self on the other. This is because, in reading terms, diagnosis sees the reading self project the self-in-the-world’s particular extratextual cultural knowledges and experiences in a materialisation of the narrative. The reading self subsequently gains opportunities to explore the relationship between existing conceptions of selfhood (and associated diagnostic criteria) and the narrative’s representation of self, and to test new, more flexible ways of thinking. However, even as diagnosis politicises textual representation (as psychosis, for example), it nonetheless tends to conceal its politics of reading. This can be one of the dangers of “specialist postcolonial reading, whereby politics are ‘read off’ at the level of the aesthetic” (Procter, 2009, p.182). Such readings can prioritise diagnosing the representation of political issues such as refugee and asylum seeker personhood, over and above the geopolitical, cultural and institutional/intellectual associations and legal implications of diagnosis, and the location of the reader/analyst and the text/analysand. As we will observe, diagnostic readings can consequently sometimes enact forms of epistemic and ontic violence that we might more readily associate with neocolonialism rather than postcolonialism.

To begin, then, Chigwedere traces the ways in which the novel formally and thematically maps the narrator’s spatial displacement onto an alienation of the self,

finding that the narrator ultimately attempts to take refuge in Shingi's identity. Applying the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Laing, she locates the narrator's trauma in repressed memories of "his participation in a brutal murder of an opposition party member, and the violence of his rape in prison" as well as "his present sense of alienation and displacement" (2017, p.177).¹²⁹ This reading depends on the reading self experiencing the narrator as self-alienated, and, together with the self-in-the-world, linking his condition to what is experienced as his repression of migration and acts of violence in the text as well as to treatment models for repression outside the text (hence, Freud and Laing's applicability). Chigwedere's diagnostic approach to the text allows her to engage with Zimbabwean nationals' experience of bodily and sexual violence, and this violence's subsequent manifestation in forms of psychical trauma and repression in the country of asylum. But it is also a limited reading of the text, principally in its reliance on the reliability of the narrator's rape testimony and psychoanalytic and traumatic treatment models.

First, let us focus on possible readings of the narrator's rape testimony. Central to Chigwedere's reading is the perception that the narrator flees from himself and toward Shingi because he was raped in prison and this trauma causes him to dissociate. The relevant passage appears in Chapter 2. The narrator tells us:

me I know what Chikurubi Maximum Prison is like; I have been there before and it is full of them people that carry likkle horrors such as them sharpened bicycle spokes and they want you to donate your buttocks so they can give you Aids; if you refuse then bicycle spoke go through your stomach like it is made of toilet paper and you is bleeding inside all night and have no chance of making it to the morning. No one can want to go there again. Life is not fair me I know after they hold the spoke to my heart. (21)

¹²⁹ G12 may seem to enact a similar reading, even if they describe it in less sophisticated terms. G12 only "half read" the novel, but enjoyed its portrayal of the "disturbing life of migrant whose identity eventually slips into his compatriot."

Chigwedere rightly points out that “the possible rape he endured while in prison [...is] never explicitly portrayed” (2017, p.170). Nonetheless, in the final line the narrator may among some readers be seen to confirm the sexual assault. The narrator suggests that if prisoners fail to comply with the sexual demands of other prisoners, they are murdered. He also makes clear that he himself has been threatened with murder – “they hold the spoke to my heart.” Given that he lives to tell us about his experience in prison, we may therefore infer that he was raped by other inmates.¹³⁰ The reference is subtle though; readers may or may not appreciate the significance of this recollection depending on whether their reading selves confidently translated the euphemism “donate your buttocks so they can give you Aids” as rape in the first place. Some readers may even dismiss the rape as untrue in as much as the narrator continually presents as unreliable, particularly in his blind loyalty to ‘His Excellency’ President Robert Mugabe and his condemnation of all contrary news about Zimbabwe and defamatory accounts of himself as “propaganda” (see 8-9; 43; 68; 79; 89; 104; 119; 135). In reading terms, the reading self and the self-in-the-world may supply the referent ‘rape’ and may deduce that the narrator is claiming to have narrowly avoided death through rape, but they may place this in dialogue with their broader understanding of the narrator’s character. As Chigwedere acknowledges in relation to his refusal to process the destruction of Mother’s village as anything but “propaganda”, the narrator often engages in a denial of reality (2017, p.176). Particularly because the passage is bookended by “me I know”, a phrase which sometimes signals his misplaced confidence in his own (self-)awareness, readers may be motivated to textualise the narrator’s rape claim. However, insofar as this means denying the

¹³⁰ To the extent that the prisoners are not described as HIV-positive, his rape does not, however, “explai[n] the great fear he reveals throughout the narrative of having possibly contracted AIDS” as Chigwedere suggests (2017, p.170). It may instead speak to the narrator’s homophobia. This is corroborated by a later episode in which, in response to Farayi’s suggestion that Zimbabwean girls are becoming lesbians or prostitutes in England, the narrator replies: “‘Lesbian? That’s just lack of real men; bring them these girls here and we cure this silliness in one night’” (93).

authenticity of testimonies of sexual violence, some readers' selves-in-the-world may intervene in this, their own reading, and insist on the intratextual materiality of the narrator's storied experience and its political exigencies.

Even if we interpretively substantiate the narrator's rape testimony, we may not straightforwardly agree with Chigwedere that he resultantly dissociates and takes refuge inside Shingi's body. The narrator tells us early on that he finds it difficult to differentiate between his own life experiences and those of Shingi: "you know what it's like with old friends, you know each other so well that sometimes you is not sure if your memories belong to him or vice versa" (9). This may be forgotten or deemed insignificant. The reading self may merely continue to track the development of the distinctive narrative voice while calling on the self-in-the-world to supply a relevant referent for the phenomenon being described, likely nothing more complex than 'a long and close friendship'. But this passage may take on new significance in light of later allusions to Shingi's own rape. If we reread the episodes which Chigwedere argues pertain to the narrator's fear of having contracted AIDS, it is striking that they also intimate that Shingi is HIV-positive. Like the narrator, Shingi has been to prison (71). The narrator worries that Shingi has AIDS because he is suffering with diarrhoea (154). But later, the narrator has diarrhoea and fears again that he has AIDS (217). When the reading self encounters this parallelism, it can either recall the earlier episode and consider that the narrator may have mixed up his own and Shingi's memories, co-produce Shingi and the narrator as the same person, or recognise that they share experiences of prison and diarrhoea, and potentially rape and (perceived) HIV-positive status. On any of these readings, it is difficult to maintain that Shingi constitutes an escape for the narrator.

The later episode, in which the narrator reports suffering with diarrhoea and descends into an AIDS-related panic, may be seen to support a reading of the narrator and

Shingi's embodiment as coterminous. There takes place a subtle shift in referent whereby the narrator may be recognised as Shingi, or vice versa. "[The narrator is] the only one left inside our house" (215). He is erratically searching for the rat reportedly responsible for eating his food, and tells us "I feel like I have fever inside my head" (215). Yet, "after midnight when the prepay electricity meter run out credit", the narrator tells us that "suddenly there is darkness inside *Shingi's* head" (217; emphasis added). The reading self may explain away this shift in referent by recalling that the house is routinely described as a head, and by reading such descriptions as mere analogies. However, the reading self may find mention of Shingi's head surprising on this occasion, given the preceding description of the narrator's head as feverish. The text here solicits a parallel reading of the narrator's head and Shingi's head, both by thwarting expected references to the narrator's head and by periodically describing the squat as "our house" (as in the above example). That being the case, and provided that the self-in-the-world provides as a referent to their heads concepts such as 'self', 'psyche', 'consciousness' or 'imaginary', readers may co-construct the narrator and Shingi's horizons of experiences as coterminous. On this reading, Shingi cannot represent a site of refuge for the narrator because, as the same person, Shingi shares the narrator's embodied and psychical trauma. Alternatively, readers may operate a diagnostic reading of the narrator's possession of Shingi in recognition that the narrator "breathe[s] black bitter wind into our house" as he works in the dark after the electricity outage (217). At the mention of wind, the reading self and the self-in-the-world may recall characterisations of the narrator as mamhepo and intuit his possession of Shingi and Shingi's house/head. Yet, importantly, readers cannot easily link this spirit possession to the narrator's rape because Shingi either shares this traumatic experience or has come to share it through possession, and thus cannot be a site of refuge for the narrator.

Second, let us focus on the limitations of traumatic and psychoanalytic explanatory frameworks. Chigwedere's deployment of Freud's and Laing's psychoanalytic theories, and Cathy Caruth's articulation of trauma theory allows her to register the extent to which the asylum seekers' experiences in both countries of domicile rob them of selfhood and the ability to self-signify. But her psychoanalytic reading forecloses diagnostic readings which identify Shingi or the narrator as spirit-possessed. It also risks participating in precisely the denial of asylum seekers' experiences through its recourse to proto-medical paradigms. This is because trauma theory derives from psychoanalysis, whose "key assumptions and practices – its embedded standards of normality and deviance, and the therapeutic rehabilitation of agitated states through self-disclosing utterances – cannot be completely separated from the utterly abnormal and aberrant effects of colonial surveillance, torture, and suppression" (Nicholls, 2013, p.3). Psychoanalysis' individualising pathology and "its claim for a universally present development of subject, psyche, and sexuality (derived from racially-differentiated bodies that supposedly evidence discrepantly evolved psychic states)" (Nicholls 2013, p.3) persist in trauma theory, which resultantly exposes marginalised subjects to one of the very tools of their marginalisation. Additionally, trauma theory's universalism conveniently obscures precipitating material conditions of trauma such as forms of oppression and persecution (see Craps, 2013, pp.27-28). Chigwedere works against the non-materialist dimensions of trauma theory by continually linking the narrator's psychical displacement to experience of sexual violence and his seeking asylum in London. But, without due attention to the politics of the diagnosis – the politics of diagnostic reading – appropriations of trauma theory such as Chigwedere's risk exposing

their objects of study to epistemic and ontic harm.¹³¹ Chigwedere's reading of *Harare North* is thus inscribed with retrograde, neocolonial dispositions.

Fiona McCann differently enacts a diagnostic reading of *Harare North* whereby the narrator can be seen to transform into Shingi. She links the narrator's "ontological instability", and his resultant transformation into Shingi at the end of the novel, to his identity "as an illegal immigrant" who "literally does not exist in Britain" insofar as he lies outside of socially-constructed notions of citizenship and the human (2014, p.76). For McCann, the narrator's peculiar embodiment as Shingi at the novel's end is part of what establishes the work's political dissensus insofar as it registers the narrator's abiding agency, showing his capacity for possession in the midst of spatial, legal, economic dispossession. Let us consider her critical position in reading terms. Her reading self seems to lend credibility to the narrator's self-description as undocumented. The reading self's substantiation of the narrator's legal status motivates it to recruit the self-in-the-world, which thinks about the political implications of his being in London illegally. The self-in-the-world co-produces the narrator as an undocumented Zimbabwean migrant and retrofits his account of being a Green Bomber with existing knowledge about the youth militia. It also projects the narrator's psychological attachments to Zimbabwe into the text, supplies relevant legal knowledge relating to undocumented migrants' rights, and expresses an awareness of the extent to which his being "'omitted from human discursivity'" is a typical situation for undocumented persons (McCann, 2014, p.76). This

¹³¹ Foreignising redeployments of trauma theory (for example, Fanon (1963)) help to mitigate its potential incompatibility with those who have suffered colonial exploitation and oppression. In addition, trauma theory has engendered the possibilities of 'multidirectional memory' wherein histories of the Shoah/Holocaust, slavery and colonialism can be co-understood in revealing ways (Rothberg, 2008, p.225). Some of the more incisive applications of trauma theory may contest ideas of a homogenous West and a persecuted non-West in important ways (see Rothberg, 2008, p.228). Arguably, it is precisely because trauma theory derives from (Freudian) psychoanalysis that this is possible: both Western and Jewish, Freud's personhood disputes the use of West/non-West "as practical shorthand for unequal power relations" (Rothberg, 2008, p.228). Of course, what Rothberg misses here is Freud's continual appropriation of 'Africa' in the negotiation of his Western and Jewish identity (see Nicholls, 2019).

diagnostic reading allows McCann to register the loss of personhood that asylum can entail. It may also allow for a critical evaluation of concepts such as human rights. But this reading is highly specific. It mobilises prior knowledge around refugeedom. Moreover, it selectively manifests the material and textual, as in the materialisation of the narrator's professed legal status and his (mis)recognition of himself as Shingi at the novel's close. The structuring assumptions of McCann's reading also keep in play logics of exclusion, which we may more readily associate with neoimperialism. That is to say, even as her reading seems to precipitate a critique of human rights legislation, its abiding attachment to the narrator's testimony (its faith in the narrator's account of being a Green Bomber, of making a false asylum claim, and being undocumented) continues to perpetuate the exclusionary logic of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Specifically, McCann's investment in the narrator's account parallels the UDHR's Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which "depends almost entirely on the story of the claimant" (Woolley, 2017, p.378). This convention problematically creates and relies on "the 'asylum story': an idealized version of refugeehood on which the civic incorporation of the asylum seeker depends and which circulates in a narrative economy that sets the terms for the enunciation of refugee experience" (Woolley, 2017, pp.378-379). In other words, McCann's reading allows her to critique the exclusionary mechanics of human rights law even as it perpetuates the UDHR's central tenet of "narratability" (Schaffer and Smith, 2004, p.3).

Let us elaborate some alternative readings of the narrator and Shingi's embodiment. First, we might not believe that the narrator is an undocumented migrant. Motivated by the self-in-the-world's notion of what constitutes reliable behaviour (consistency, familiarity, others' trust, etc.), the reading self may experience the narrator as unreliable. Consequently, the reading self may discourage the self-in-the-world from

co-constructing the narrator as tragically dispossessed of human rights and personhood, and as gaining agency through his possession of Shingi. The reading self may instead suspect that the narrator does not take possession of Shingi's documents, but instead represses that they actually belong to him because he is made to feel illegal in London. We have seen Oyedele (2013) read in this way. The reading self's construction of the narrator as documented may provide access to an ethics of reading through which readers sympathise with the limited opportunities available to even those migrants who legally inhabit Britain. But it may also frustrate sympathetic identification because, through his false testimony, the narrator denies us access to his lived experience. Resultantly, readers may engage politically with the unassailable differences between their experiences and those of the text and its subjects. This may be a highly situated act, which attempts to navigate issues of the other's self-representation, or it may entail affects of frustration and antipathy that cause readers to disavow political interest in the other and in texts which engage with apparently untraversable subjects.

Second, it may frustrate us that the narrator comes to London without legal documentation. Based on the extent to which the self-in-the-world's conception of morality is connected to legality, the reading self may simply process the narrator as a callous criminal, whose murderous secret and deception of immigration and customs authorities is undeserving of sympathy or understanding, and whose theft of Shingi's legal documents is deplorably fraudulent. The self-in-the-world might actually enable a reading through which the protagonist's unlawful behavior in the text is connected to real and imagined illegal activity committed by migrants in the world, and instrumentalised to justify immigration restrictions and human rights abuses of undocumented migrants and detainees.

Third, we may engage with the novel's ending in which the narrator seems to become Shingi more pessimistically. McCann suggests that the reflection of Shingi that stares back at the narrator in the final episode testifies to the narrator's agency and resilience by way of Shingirai (meaning 'perseverance' in chiShona) (McCann, 2014, p.76). Dobrota Pucherová offers a far gloomier diagnosis of the novel's ending. Pucherová's reading self initially experiences the narrator's use of Shingi's passport as resistant and resourceful in light of the necessity of work permits. Her self-in-the-world furnishes this account with the rationale that Shingi and the narrator merely "tak[e] advantage of the difficulty white British administrators experience in distinguishing black Africans on a photograph" (Pucherová, 2015, p.164). However, by the novel's end, Pucherová's reading self comes to experience the narrator's recognition of himself as Shingi as a sign of his mental degradation, which her self-in-the-world supports with a quasi-medical language of split and multiple identity. She finds that "the protagonist's ludic engagement with multiple identities turns against himself as he no longer knows who he is, losing any touch with reality" (2015, p.166). The narrator's embodiment as Shingi in the final chapter thus cannot be fixed as a source of agency, perseverance or resistance, and may be experienced as precisely the opposite: a symptom of his being overcome.

Different diagnostic readings suggest that the narrator's transformation into Shingi takes place much earlier than the novel's ending. Zoë Wicomb (2016) is perhaps exemplary. She suggests that the narrator experiences an "ontological crisis", and begins his transformation into Shingi before both the violent attack of Shingi drives the narrator to madness, and before the concluding chapter in which she believes the narrator is finally possessed by Shingi (Wicomb, 2016, p.52). She traces how the narrator's transformation at the novel's end is anticipated formally by the anonymity of the first person, the "me I"

conjugation and the use of second person, and thematically by way of the slippage between the narrator's relatives and Shingi's own, the narrator's use of Shingi legal documents, and episodes featuring mirrors in which they start to look the same (Wicomb, 2016, pp.52-62). Wicomb thus intuitively Shingi's possession of the narrator before it is perceived to take place explicitly. This diagnostic reading allows Wicomb to register the persistence of doubles in the narrative, and these doubles' kaleidoscopic reframing of phenomena such as London and Zimbabwe (connected by way of the referent 'Harare North'). But, again, it is a partial reading. Let us query some of the specific orientations of Wicomb's reading of the narrator's becoming Shingi with recourse to my model of reading.

First, her reading depends on the reading self processing the "me I" conjugation as a singular stylistic feature that implicitly produces the narrator as subject and object simultaneously, and on the self-in-the-world co-producing this perspectival split as not only a split psyche but, specifically, as symptoms of Shingi's possession of the narrator. But there are alternative readings of this feature in the text. The reading self may encounter "me I" as a singular English-language construction, which the self-in-the-world may recognise as a manifestation of the chiShona use of the lexical item 'ini' to mean both the object pronoun 'me' and the subject pronoun 'I' (see Learn101, 2018). The phrase "me I" may then come to signal the narrator's linguistic non-proficiency. Apart from these realist varieties of reading, there is also the possibility that readers will carry out a meta-realist reading wherein "me I", as a transliteration of chiShona, comes to corroborate the novel's having been translated from chiShona into English; after all, the narrator does keep a "likkle diary" and hopes that "soon we meet someone that know how to write books, [and] we give them the diary and ask them to write story about me, you and Tsitsi" (146). In other words, 'me I' might prompt the reading self to consult with the

self-in-the-world about the nature of its singularity, wherein the self-in-the-world offers a knowledge of chiShona grammar that produces ‘me I’ as a mistranslation. If this feedback loop is reframed by the reading self and the self-in-the-world’s comprehension of the text as a former diary, since published, readers might come to read ‘me I’ as a symptom of the text as found object, whose contents are experienced, written and translated before the moment of reading, and unscrupulously appropriated by otherwise invisible editors, publishers and translators. Readers may hence be inspired to ask political questions about the dimensions of the publishing industry.

Wicomb’s experience of the second person in the text is also particular. She first finds that the narrator’s use of ‘you’ confuses his and Shingi’s personhood before claiming that the transformation of the first person into the second person in the novel’s final pages “signals [...] a death of the self that is at the same time a resurrection of the physically and mentally damaged Shingi” (Wicomb, 2016, p.62). Thus, her reading self experiences early uses of the second person as generic, relating to multiple referents including the narrator and Shingi. The self-in-the-world subsequently relates the multiplicity of ‘you’ as a symptom of an unstable or multiple identity. But, when interacting with the closing passages, the reading self experiences ‘you’ as a singular second person pronoun whose referent is the narrator as object to Shingi as the subject-I. The self-in-the-world proceeds to experience this grammatical objectification as the loss of the narrator’s perspective and selfhood, and the triumph of Shingi as his other identity. We can observe here the ways in which reading is internally inconsistent. Individuals’ responses to the second person cannot be predicted because surrounding context and progress through the novel affect their experience of ‘you’. Moreover, and as Chapter 3 showed, the second person is experienced differently by different people and at different times. Responses to *Harare North* testify to this. Drawing on Brian Richardson’s

classification of second person narratives, Madhu Krishnan argues that the second person in the novel is autotelic. It refers to the reader such that the reading self is moved to recreate the narrator's performance of self with the effect of "revealing, [to the self-in-the-world,] beyond the performativity of the self, the ultimate performativity of the very categories of nation, self and other" (Krishnan, 2014, p.49). On this reading, the narrative's use of the second person in the final chapter cannot signify the narrator's transformation into Shingi. Of course, as we observed in the previous chapter, readers may or may not produce the second person as autotelic, depending on the desirability of the intratextual narratee's role. Readers may also experience the second person otherwise, depending on their co-production of narrative circumstance. To reflect on my own experience of reading, sometimes I experienced the second person as an allusion to the narrator's multiplicity (as in Wicomb's first reading), sometimes I felt compelled to identify with 'your' vantage point and actions (as in Krishnan's reading), and sometimes I experienced the second person as narrative apostrophe, coaching me to notice shared views and values and to empathise with (or 'feel into') 'your' experience. In many cases, the text prompted me to revise my interaction with the second person, exchanging experiences of apostrophe for an awareness of the narrator as a split or doubled subject, for example. These actual and possible responses to the second person in the text demonstrate that readers may not always attach the same significance to uses of 'you' as Wicomb. They might not agree that the final chapter's use of 'you' sees the narrator transform into Shingi, and that this transformation is anticipated by early uses of the second person.

So far, we have seen diagnoses of trauma, mental illness, and dissociative identity disorder. We have also seen these diagnoses linked to variety of material causes, including sexual violence, displacement and the challenges of seeking asylum or being a refugee.

Finally, I highlight Isaac Ndlovu's acutely eclectic diagnosis of the narrator. In my identification of its limits, I take the opportunity to think about how the narrative's own treatment of diagnosis might move us to think critically about the kinds of diagnosis we ourselves perform when it comes to reading the text. Ndlovu proposes that the narrator is multiply possessed "by Shingi's identity, his mother's restless spirit and the avenging spirit of the farm supervisor he beat to death in Zimbabwe" (2016, p.40). He uses the explanatory models of schizophrenia, possession, and haunting interchangeably in order to suggest that the narrator's transformation into Shingi is sardonically anticipated by scenes in which it is discussed that the narrator may be (suffering) *mamhepo*, which, following the text, Ndlovu defines as a possessing bad spirit (2016, p.40). His reading self appears to lend authority to the frequency with which the narrator is referred to as *mamhepo* or a possessing force (as well as the ubiquity of winds in the novel). In order to better predict forthcoming plot developments, the reading self sources implications of the narrator as *mamhepo* from the self-in-the-world, which wields an archived perception of the early details of the story to corroborate that the narrator is a bad spirit but also himself 'haunted' by Mother's suicide and the murder of Goromonzi. In Ndlovu's case, the self-in-world also provides an alternative diagnosis of schizophrenia based on the narrator's 'symptoms' of possession. Faced with the novel's ending, the reading self revises its prior reading of the narrator as *mamhepo*, foregrounding instead the earlier perception of the narrator as 'haunted' and finding that it is he who is possessed. The self-in-the-world henceforth re-appropriates this reading through the lens of schizophrenia, while at the same time linking the narrator's impression of being haunted by avenging spirits to its knowledge about the arrival of Zimbabwean migrants in Britain, whose state economically and politically dispossessed Zimbabwean nationals during both the early colonial and post-independence eras (see Ndlovu, 2016, p.40). This complicated reading

exerts different, even mutually incompatible, kinds of diagnosis on the text over the course of reading. It does so in the service of the politics of reading: Ndlovu ultimately seeks to argue that *Harare North* stages its own circulation and reception in the global literary marketplace. However, he fails to engage with the politics of his own reading – the cultural and institutional significance of the different diagnoses he enacts – or the ethics of reading through which these politics are manifest.

Let us think about the different diagnoses that Ndlovu operates in turn. Mamhepo clearly responds to the text's own explanatory framework. But Ndlovu suggests that the text uses mamhepo in an anachronistic way to court assumptions that the narrator is himself mamhepo, before subverting such assumptions and depicting the narrator as possessed by Shingi as well as his mother and Goromonzi in the final chapter (2016, p.40). Ndlovu is wary of diagnosing mamhepo because he views mamhepo as an "ethnographic" reference intended "to sell the book to a more affluent British and North American audience", interested in the exotic (2016, p.35). Hence, the meaning of 'mamhepo' is glossed the first time that it appears (2016, p.40). The interests and ideals of British and North American readerships should not be guessed at. This thesis has continually shown that readers' cultural, religious and geopolitical identities do not determine in advance the ways that they read. Diagnoses of mamhepo may in certain circumstances be exoticist. But they do not necessarily entail engaging in exoticism. In chiShona, 'mamhepo' literally means 'the winds', but refers to an ailment of bad luck, misfortune or recurrent illness.¹³² It is treated through an exorcism in which mafunga-mafunga roots are burned until their smoke fills the house of the ailing person (Shoko,

¹³² Tabona Shoko describes 'mamhepo' as a Karanga diagnosis in both language and ethnocultural terms, where 'Karanga' refers to an ethnic and linguistic sub-group of vaShona people (Shoko, 2016, xi). I describe it as chiShona here because I am suspicious of the validity of existing linguistic and ethnocultural categories in Africa. Knowledge Teya (2017) provides a useful summary of the colonial construction of Kalanga and Karanga as well as Nguni in Zimbabwe.

2016, p.98). The narrative's depiction of the narrator as mamhepo therefore departs from Shona conceptions of the affliction because it represents a person (the narrator) as mamhepo, and equates mamhepo to bad spirits (for example, see 21). This may be another reason why Ndlovu is resistant to such a diagnosis. Yet, reading selves may in different degrees participate in the production of the narrator as mamhepo if their selves-in-the-world either do not possess sufficient knowledge to comprehend that mamhepo cannot traditionally be embodied, or if their selves-in-the-world suspend their knowledge of vaShona conceptions of mamhepo in order to ethically attend to the narrator's self-representation. Whether readers rely on the novel's articulation of mamhepo as a possessing bad spirit or know it to refer to an ailment, diagnosing the narrator with mamhepo clearly undermines his intratextual embodiment. By the former reading, it is not clear that the narrator ever existed in an embodied way, beyond the body of his host Shingi. By the latter, the narrator may be perceived as possessed – if not by a spirit, then by a spate of misfortune that deprives him of bodily agency. Here, then, is a potential limit to Ndlovu's reading.

Effectively, Ndlovu reads mamhepo as a symptom rather than a cause. This transformation of tropes of spirit possession into allegories for migration or symptoms of schizophrenia is contingent not only on the self-in-the-world's knowledge of schizophrenia symptoms and contemporary Zimbabwean diasporas and their motivations, but also on a latent belief that spirit possession is a non-worldly experience that can be explained by contrastively 'material' phenomena such schizophrenia. For some readers, schizophrenia may simply be a diagnosis of the narrator's symptoms, rather than their cause. Those whose reading selves have tracked the narrator's acute fear of AIDS throughout the novel, and whose selves-in-the-world are familiar with AIDS symptoms, may diagnose the narrator with AIDS. As David S. Simmons intimates in his ethnographic

study of the treatment of HIV/AIDS by biomedical clinics and n'anga (traditional healers), mamhepo and AIDS-related dementia have in common the symptom of violent outbursts (see 2012, p.14). For other readers, biomedical diagnosis at large may be unsustainable. It can be seen to delegitimise local and indigenous epistemologies, and to privilege scientific and psychosociological explanations of wellbeing. The clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia in particular may be difficult to sustain for readers whose selves-in-the-world recognise that schizophrenia is derived from “Eurocentric psychiatr[y]”, and may therefore be experienced as incompatible with the narrator’s psychical experiences (Musanga, 2017, p.784).

Others may avoid diagnoses of schizophrenia or other psychiatric disorders because, in the moment of diagnosis, they recognise themselves performing as Jenny, who diagnoses the narrator with dissociative identity disorder (DID) (163). Through Jenny, the text seems to anticipate clinical diagnoses of the narrator, and to render them uncomfortable and their diagnosticians unsavoury. Jenny lives a parasitic existence on the fringes of society. The narrator portrays her as “some strange woman, complete with rough face, smoker’s throat, rasping laughter, them nose rings, dog and mouse, pockets full of them things and cigarette butts” and hair like a bird’s nest (162). We learn that she quit her plumbing course to be a fruit picker in Somerset, before heartbreak brought her to London. She is now a yoga-practising “eco-warrior” (166), who lives a nomadic existence with a dog and mouse as companions. Her politics are comically depicted. In the service of animal rights, she convinces Shingi to feed the rat living the Brixton squat (169). Furthermore, despite regularly eating “our food” and smoking “our skunk” (166), she defends her right to not dispose of her dog’s waste by invoking starving Africans. In response to a neighbour’s complaint, “she just start throwing she mouth in rough way: yeee children is dying of starvation in Zimbabwe and you come out whinging about dog

shit in front of your house; yeee let's get perspective here please!" (174). Because the narrator depicts Jenny as a selfish individual whose delinquency is motivated not by necessity but choice, some readers may not align themselves with Jenny's vantage point. When the reading self is drawn to clinically assess the narrator's mental wellbeing both by the self-in-the-world's knowledge of schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder symptoms and by inexplicit references to hallucinations and Jenny's diagnosis, it may pull away because the reading self and the self-in-the-world together recognise Jenny's abuse of her privilege and her facile individualist politics. We may be tutored to withhold clinical diagnoses of the narrator lest we want to face our cultural and epistemic continuities with Jenny.¹³³ In its investment in the authority of schizophrenia diagnoses, Ndlovu's reading is partial and risks compatibility with Jenny's liberal horizon.

4.2.c. Revelation: The Narrator and Shingi are the Same Person

Our third and final reading community perceives the narrator and Shingi as the same person. This reading community, which encompasses both professional and non-professional readers, tends to lend significance to *Harare North*'s ending, finding that its formal and thematic doubling unmistakably merges the narrator and Shingi's identity. To this extent, the ending often retrospectively transforms their reading, which has tended to perceive the two characters as distinct. Hence, I describe these readings as revelatory. Each of the readers here characterised as performing revelatory readings identifies the moment of revelation as the ending of *Harare North*. This being the case, this sub-section

¹³³ Importantly, Jenny may not be wrong that the narrator suffers from dissociative identity disorder. As Dave Gunning has noted, loathsome as she is, Jenny is later correct that HIV-negative means that one does not have HIV or AIDS, and so it is not out of the question that Jenny is a more reliable witness of the narrator's character than the narrator himself (Gunning 2015, pp.129-130). The narrator may well suffer with dissociative identity disorder, but the text encourages us to disavow this diagnosis and to "question[s] the very authority of the models of traumatic experience used to explain dissociated states" (Gunning, 2015, p.130).

starts with an analysis of the novel's ending. It proceeds to track revelatory responses to the ending, excavating their textualist and materialist activities as well as their ethical and political potential. It then draws attention to different ways of reading the text's ending in order to highlight the limits of revelatory readings, and to characterise such readings as forms of non-understanding.

Allow me to begin by reproducing the ending of *Harare North*:

Soft rain start and get the tarmac wet so that them street lamps reflect off the wet tarmac doubling up in numbers. Even me – there is my double image reflected on the wet tarmac. In the sky the moon struggle to come out of them clouds. Shingi's trousers is missing now, I am only in his underpants. Right in front of my feeties there is puddle of water that has form from the rain and street lamp is shining into it. I look down into puddle; the crack that is streaming out of corner of my glasses' left lens in all directions make things unclear; I can see Shingi looking straight back. My stump finger now feel cold and sore from carrying suitcase. I shake my head and Shingi shake his head until I start to feel dizzy. Why he want to shake me out of his head like so, me I don't know.

I take a few steps following Shingi's nose in no particular direction. I run. I can feel my bum jump jump behind me like heap of jelly. [...]

Half naked, you turn left into Electric Avenue and walk. You start to hear in tongues; it feel like Shingi is on his way back to you. You can tell, you know it; Shingi is now coming back. Already there's struggle over your feeties; you are telling right foot to go in one direction and he is telling left foot to go in another direction. You tell the right foot to go in one direction and he is being traitor shoe-doctor and tell left foot to go in another direction. You stand there in them mental backstreets and one big battle rage even if you have no more ginger for it. (229).

The novel's ending formally and thematically addresses doubling. Formally, it moves from the first person to the second person in a way that may see readers confuse the narrator and Shingi's point of view. Thematically, it features mirrored surfaces in which the narrator recognises himself as Shingi; it describes the narrator's possession of a distinctively cracked pair of glasses and a stump finger, characteristics readers may recall have elsewhere been associated with Shingi (see 35); it depicts both carrying out the same

action – shaking their head(s) – simultaneously; and it dramatises ‘your’ and ‘his’ battle over the same body. The doubling effect is cumulative. When the reading self first encounters “my double image reflected on the wet tarmac”, the self-in-the-world may simply provide knowledge and experience of the trick of reflective surfaces. It is when the trope of doubling recurs that the reading self may be motivated to revise its comprehension of the narrative plot, and recognise the narrator and Shingi as one in the same person. The reading self may consequently inspire the self-in-the-world to revisit its understanding of the story and to re-produce the text differently as about a Zimbabwean migrant who conceals from us and himself his identity as Shingi. The narrator may thus not be a Green Bomber at all – certainly, Shingi seems not to be connected to the National Youth Service.

The final chapter may therefore stimulate revelatory readings, which have differing ethical and political implications depending on how readers interpretively manage the revelation that the narrator and Shingi might be one in the same person. Let us observe some revelatory responses to the novel’s ending in order to highlight their particular ethical and political resonances. G4 writes in their review that *Harare North* is “[a] truly brilliant and thought-provoking read but the ending totally caught me off guard!! I think I would have given it 5 stars if the huge plot twist had been more than a few lines long. Would have made it easier to understand/digest.” G4 doesn’t disclose the “plot twist”, likely so as not to spoil the book for others.¹³⁴ However, given the significance they attach to the novel’s ending, presumably they are talking about the possibility that the narrator and Shingi may share an identity. Paying ethical attention to the text’s acts of self-construction, their reading self appears to manifest the formal and

¹³⁴ Goodreads introduced spoiler tags in 2011 in response to community feedback. Users can now hide portions of their text that contain important plot points in both group discussion and review contexts. Many users nevertheless continue to simply omit reference to key story developments in their online posts.

thematic doubling as a doubled or split self. It is unclear how their self-in-the-world manages this complexity materially, but G4 does tell us that “the ending totally caught [them] off guard”. It is possible that G4 recognises the politics of reading here. They admit that the text thwarts their expectations, which may have to do with existing knowledges and experiences of selfhood and its expression as well as how novels operate. In this sense, their reading embeds the potential, if not the realisation, of self-recognition and self-critique.

Interestingly, a second non-professional reader penalises the text for what they perceive as its surprise ending. Giving the novel a rating of just one star on Goodreads, G23 bemoans: “The only semi-likable character apparently doesn’t even..... / No. / Just no. / My copy is for sale.” Again, this reader does not make their reading of the plot explicit; they do not disclose which “semi-likeable” character “doesn’t even [exist]”. However, it is likely that they are thinking of Shingi, whose innocence and naivety are diametrically opposed with the narrator’s cunning and dubious political affiliations from the very first chapter, whose stutter and politeness may endear readers, and, relatedly, whose story arc of legal migration, legal (albeit debasing) employment, poverty, drug addiction and victimhood may make him more sympathisable than the duplicitous narrator (as well as cheating Aleck and Tsitsi, and exploitative Dave and Jenny). When their reading self perceives that the narrator recognises himself as Shingi, G23 experiences Shingi as disingenuous, and resents having been misled. They are so frustrated at having been ‘fooled’ into sympathising with Shingi that they now seek to distance themselves from the material object *Harare North* and seek recompense through resale. Their ethical obligation to the structural doubling of the text’s final episode therefore fosters a reactionary politics of reading through which they disavow the text and

time spent reading it. They forfeit the opportunity to politically interrogate their preference for Shingi, and the strength of their displeasure at having been deceived.

Let us move on to Oyedeji, whose revelatory reading has been deployed over the course of this section in order to make explicit the limits of both realist and diagnostic readings. Oyedeji suggests that, “by the end of the novel, we are to believe that our protagonist and his friend Shingi are one and the same person, two spirits occupying the same body – a split personality, if you will” (2013, p.49). The novel’s ending inspires Oyedeji to return to the prologue wherein the narrator self-identifies as “illegal” and uses Shingi’s passport (1), and to use his new knowledge that the narrator is Shingi to comprehend that the narrator represses Shingi because Shingi’s documented status does not express the struggles he faces as a migrant in London. In reading terms, the novel’s concluding pages guide the reading self toward a co-production of the narrator and Shingi’s personhood, which thwarts the self-in-the-world’s archived conception of the two characters as representative of the experiences of undocumented and documented migrants respectively. The reading self guides the self-in-the-world toward a more flexible understanding of the two characters’ selfhood, wherein they can be compositely manifest. The self-in-the-world suspends material referents and epistemic schemata that have to do with migration and its challenges, exchanging them for those that have to do with psychological repression, spirit possession, and the psychiatric disorder of dissociative identity disorder. (The latter two are of course intimated by the text, as we have seen). It projects these values onto the reading self, which subsequently renders somewhat coherent the narrator and Shingi’s composite embodiment at the novel’s end, and retrospectively transforms their prior reading of the two characters as distinct persons. The reading self concludes that the narrator represses his embodiment as Shingi, itself a result of possession and/or dissociative identity disorder, because his experience of

migration does not feel legal. The self-in-the-world supports this reading by calling forth once more an awareness of the material inequalities that characterise contemporary British immigration.

This revelatory reading is ethically-sensitive to the narrator's self-representation, and engaged with the politics of migration. Oyedeji is moved to perform an incisive critique of the British state's regulation of human life through immigration policies. Yet, it is inattentive to the politics of reading. Oyedeji's eclectic materialisation of the narrative by way of divergent, psychological and spiritual registers as well as a history of migration is politically uneasy. It risks rendering psychoanalysis and spirit possession mutually interchangeable theoretical apparatus, rather than historically- and culturally-specific epistemologies that have particular significance within the colonial era and in today's materially- and epistemically-uneven world.¹³⁵ Both frameworks also acquire particular resonances and associated levels of legitimacy in the text. As we have seen, *mamhepo*, made metonymic with spirit possession in the text, is invoked by Zimbabwean characters (who may be perceived as cultural authorities), while psychoanalysis is appropriated by the politically-dubious, white hippie Jenny. Resultantly, even readers who agree that the novel's ending reveals that the narrator and Shingi are the same person may not exert psychoanalytic strategies of reading over the characters.

Inevitably, there are also different ways of reading the novel's ending. Let us acknowledge alternative readings in order to identify the limits of revelatory readings, which ultimately manifest the narrator and Shingi as the same person. A diagnostic reading is possible. G3, for example, describes *Harare North* as "[q]uite an amazing

¹³⁵ Nicholls (2019) offers an incisive history of the racism and Eurocentrism underpinning Freudian psychoanalysis. In addition, though engagement in possession rituals can mimic and so undercut colonial authority, their resistant potential can sometimes be re-assimilated by colonial and neocolonial epistemologies such as anthropology (see Huggan, 1997 for a balanced appraisal anthropology's role in both exoticism and the negotiation of cultural difference).

exploration of a psyche gone awry” but “want[s] to read it a second time.” They indicate having missed earlier textual cues that would corroborate the novel’s ending. Although it is possible that this reader is referring to possible allusions to the narrator and Shingi being the same person, the ambiguity of their online review signals another possible interpretation. Given that they claim that the text is an “exploration of a psyche gone awry”, they may also want to re-read the text in order to determine whether it signals the narrator’s possession of Shingi or even whether it foreshadows the narrator’s *misidentification* as Shingi (as in Ndlovu, 2016).

Readers may also enact complex realist readings of the novel’s ending which process the narration literally and maintain a distinction between the narrator and Shingi. In ratifying the narrator’s vision of Shingi, one such realist reading might see the reading self and the self-in-the-world (with its archived understanding of the text) proceed to plot linguistic and spatial continuities between the narrator’s engagement with Shingi in the final pages of the text, and the episode in which Shingi is attacked by a homeless person. The reading self may conclude that the narrator is precisely the ‘tramp’ who attacks and kills Shingi. Consider that the narrator’s (self-)encounter with Shingi at the text’s close takes place in “them mental backstreets” beyond Marks and Spencer’s (229). Earlier, the narrator tells us that Shingi is attacked in “them mental backstreets” by a “tramp” (185).¹³⁶ At the end, the narrator “take[s] few steps following Shingi’s nose in no particular direction”, and “can feel [his] bum jump behind [him] like heap of jelly” (229). The “tramp” who attacks Shingi is described similarly: “the tramp’s bum jumping in the air like heap of jelly” (185). In the early episode alone, both the narrator and the “tramp”

¹³⁶ Selves-in-the-world with a knowledge of Brixton, or who engage with representations of space when they read, may note that there is a Marks and Spencer’s in Brixton, which is located exactly where the narrator suggests. The real Marks and Spencer’s branch is just over one hundred metres away from Electric Avenue, which the narrator heads toward from the “mental backstreets” behind the store in the final episode (229). It also connected to King’s College Hospital via Coldharbour Lane, and to Brixton Police Station via Brixton Road, just as the narrator suggests in the earlier episode in which Shingi is attacked (186).

wield a sharp object: “[t]he big tramp in front of [Shingi] is holding sharp instrument [...] I hold my screwdriver tight” (185). And we learn from the later episode that the narrator is “[h]alf naked” (229), just like the homeless man who “wear[s] T-shirt only and pair of dark underpants” (185). Finally, in both episodes, it is raining. It is therefore possible to read these episodes as alternative tellings of the scene in which Shingi is violently attacked. The first offers an unknown homeless man as the culprit, while the latter reveals that it was in fact the narrator who perpetrated the attack. Revelatory readings may therefore be limited in their ability to account for the possibility that the narrator and Shingi remain distinct at the end of the text.

To conclude this section, the contemporary reception of *Harare North* varies widely. Among professional and non-professional readers, the text’s story is interpreted in three conflicting ways. Realist readings, diagnostic readings and revelatory readings each testify in different ways to the affects of reading, and can be seen to provide (sometimes unrealised) avenues for knowledge- and self-reconstitution as well as knowledge- and self-critique. Realist readings broadly participate in an ethical rethinking of the transparency of human rights and citizenship, as well as a political recognition of the different material and embodied experiences available to British nationals and Zimbabwean migrants. In an acute politicisation of the ethics of reading, diagnostic readings recognise particular psychological challenges faced by Zimbabwean migrants to the United Kingdom. At same time they precipitate, if not realise, critiques of the explanatory models used to quantify such experiences. Finally, revelatory readings observe ethical sensitivity toward self-representation while also making visible the sometimes-uncomfortable politics of reading where audience expectations and epistemic orientations are concerned. Notwithstanding their postcolonial potential, realist, diagnostic, and revelatory readings are necessarily limited readings of *Harare North*. They are internally

inconsistent, and incompatible with the text's complex structuring principles. This being the case, we may wonder whether non-understanding is an essential feature of reading, and one which precisely makes possible ethical and political reflections. Thinking about postcolonial reading as non-understanding in this way is important because it democratises reading. It legitimises non-understanding as a constitutive element of all readings, not just those enacted by non-professional readerships. Moreover, it frames non-understanding as ethically- and politically-generative.

4.3. Non-Understanding and the Postcolonial

Through an inexhaustive taxonomy of interpretive realism, diagnosis and revelation, we have identified some of the diverse ways in which readers process *Harare North*. These diverse responses are in different ways ethically- and politically- engaged with the text. By placing these different readings in dialogue and highlighting their mutual inconsistencies, we have nonetheless acknowledged that non-understanding is common to all responses considered. Non-understanding is implicit in reading. Consequently, we have considered the postcolonial potential of non-understanding. Taking its initiative from a non-professional reader's explicit admission of non-understanding, this final section considers the compatibility of self-acknowledged non-understanding and the postcolonial. It draws on postcritical scholarship and accounts of vernacular theory in order to re-evaluate the efficacy of non-understanding as a response to postcolonial texts. This section argues that self-acknowledged non-understanding is uniquely receptive to the ethics and politics of reading. Explicit admissions of non-understanding possess these advantages not because they cohere with Chikwava's "interes[t] in undermining totalising truth claims" (McCann, 2014, p.68) or his intention that the narrator's language should "sharpe[n] the otherness of the character [...so that] it can not [sic] be possible to

understand everything about him” (Dutrion, 2012). Authorial intention has no place here. Instead, self-acknowledged non-understanding interests us because it seems to express the affects of reading, to engage in a committed ethics of reading, and notwithstanding to register the politics of reading.

Section One highlighted that non-professional readers frequently describe *Harare North* as difficult. Fewer readers openly admit to not understanding the novel. Let us look at the most explicit example of this. G20 writes in their review: “This must be one of the most promising debut novels I’ve read in a while. I’m looking forward to what he does next. I didn’t quite understand the ending though.” G20 expresses their enjoyment of the text, praising it especially as a debut novel which excites them about the author’s potential. They award the novel four out of five stars on Goodreads. Nonetheless, they explicitly admit that they did not understand the novel’s ending. It is not surprising that they struggle to develop a coherent interpretive logic that makes sense of the ending of *Harare North*. Section Two showed some of the many ways that the ending can be read. But it is surprising that G20 goes on record as having not understood it. Indeed, we should differentiate G20’s non-understanding from responses previously considered, which find the novel “[a] difficult read” (G15), or which advocate for an ending that is “easier to understand/digest” (G4). Unlike G15 and G4 who imply that they eventually achieve a level of understanding, G20 is clear that understanding continues to evade them.

We can read this non-understanding in one of three ways. We could criticise it and use it to confirm existing fears and myths about non-professional readers as uneducated or uninterested. This would cohere with the textualist tradition in postcolonial studies, identified in Chapter 1, which regularly denigrates non-professional reading approaches. Alternatively, we could be sensitive to its material circumstances, and recognise it as a product of non-professional readers’ limited time and opportunity to

engage with works of literary fiction. Or we could assess its latent postcolonial potential as a form of unregulated (self-)critique. In this reading, non-understanding testifies to the enactment of an attentive ethics of reading, which makes (self-)visible the politics of reading. Thinking about explicit admissions of non-understanding in this way necessarily means engaging with non-understanding's lack of institutional authority and its precipitating material conditions. But it also involves reconstructing the interpretive processes that precede and proceed non-understanding: the reading self's ethics of reading and the self-in-the-world's conception of the politics of reading respectively. This approach alone allows us to think about non-understanding as a legitimate response to postcolonial literature, rather than as a mere symptom of a lack of education, time or opportunity. In what follows, I rehearse the both textualist and materialist positions on non-understanding before identifying their respective limits. Bearing in mind self-acknowledged non-understanding's lack of institutional privilege and its possible precipitating material conditions, I then proceed to reconstruct the reading process underpinning such a response in order to excavate its latent ethics and politics.

First, then, it is clear that explicit statements of non-understanding diverge from institutionalised practices of reading. Non-understanding dispenses with the core tenets of traditional book reviewing culture in print media. Traditional book reviewing figures itself as an "incontestable judgment", which is "univocal, [and] once-off" (Murray, 2018, p.115). Admissions of non-understanding such as G20's clearly suspend authority and finality, leaving open the possibility of multiple, even 'superior' readings. More importantly for our interests, and as we will see in greater detail, non-understanding also departs from professional reading in its lack of confidence and its distinctive affective economy. Inevitably, this leaves non-understanding and its arbiters open to charges of ignorance and vested interest. By institutional maxims, admissions of non-understanding

on the part of non-professional readers may lead us to conclude that non-professional readers simply cannot access postcolonial texts. Adopting a postcritical lens, however, we can see that professional authority is premised precisely on the delegitimisation of readings that take place outside the academy effectively on the basis that they take place outside the academy. We can also observe that the limited affective economy of professional literary criticism denies or forecloses the ethics of reading, an important aspect of reading through which readers gain opportunities for self- and knowledge-reconstitution. It moreover forecloses a meaningful politics of reading, through which readers recognise their material, cultural or institutional privileges. Insofar as they forgo self-authority and remain open to affect, admissions of non-understanding may therefore be worth taking seriously as viable responses to postcolonial literatures.

Let us observe in more detail the peculiarities of textualist approaches in order to register the uniqueness of non-understanding. Professional, textualist readings claim authority and expertise. They do this by distorting the process of reading – by presenting not just second, third and fourth readings, but such readings’ resultant critiques as reading. On this basis, professional readers implicitly or explicitly berate non-professional readers as insufficiently knowledgeable or critical. The authority of professional reading in fact rests on the identification of uncritical readings and their association with non-professional readers.¹³⁷ Chapter 1 showed this at work in textualist postcolonial scholars’ advocacy of critical reading strategies. Whether implicitly or explicitly, critique, or professional reading at large “frequent[ly] render[s] [...] the thoughts and actions of ordinary social actors as insufficiently self-aware or critical”, finding that “ordinary

¹³⁷ In this way, conceptions of literary reading may track conceptions of literary fiction, which is defined negatively and contextually as not genre fiction or mass-market or best-selling fiction, for example, and as that which is published under certain literary presses and imprints, marketed as ‘literary’ and entered for ‘literary’ prizes (Squires, 2012, p.100).

readers or viewers are dupes or dopes, prisoners of their own naïveté, gullibility, and false consciousness” (Anker and Felski, 2017, p.14). Professional readers scold others for being too ignorant, and too easily (mis)led. Professional reading also derives authority from its perceived differences from that which is formulaic, popular, or mass-produced. It has developed distinguishing formal features such as jargon, verbs associated with deconstruction (Felski, 2015, p.17), and a combination of close reading and contextual information. The professional genre is also defined by its location: it typically appears in exclusive spaces such as academic books or journals (whose reputations and rankings can guarantee or inhibit criticality) and University settings, not news outlets, internet forums or social media. In highlighting critique’s exclusivity, I mean not to underestimate the benefits of such gatekeeping, including quality control measures like peer review. Social media platforms such as Goodreads and Amazon UK customer reviews willfully forfeit peer scrutiny in favour of platforming of every potential voice and opinion in the spirit of free (market) speech. In light of my critique of free (market) speech (see Chapter 2, pgs.77-84), it would be unwise to dispense with critique by dint of its tools of discrimination. But it is worth acknowledging the extent to which our expertise depends on the perseverance of these popular platforms.

Professional reading also tends to be concerned with managing affect. Though it presents as judicious and robust, professional critique is affectively oriented and prizes a limit range of affects. As Murray argues: “university-generated literary criticism has virtually expunged emotion [or *affect* (she uses them interchangeably)] from authorized literary responses (from New Criticism right through to postmodernism, despite all their other differences)” (2018, p.125). Specifically, professional reading seeks to deter negative affects such as guilt or shame, which might be associated with ethical reading experiences of surprise and (self-)alienation. In order to do so, professional reading must

remain abidingly suspicious of positive affects, lest the practitioner be implicated in what turns out to be an experience structured by negative affects. As Felski puts it, there exists a “[p]rofessional pessimism [...which] prime[s] [us] to expect bad news, to assume that any positive state of affairs is either imaginary or evanescent, to steel ourselves for the worst” (Felski, 2015, p.128). For this reason, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) describes professional cultural and literary critique as ‘paranoid’. It observes an “anxious paranoid determination that no horror, however apparently unthinkable, shall ever come to the reader *as new*” (Sedgwick, 2002, p.146; original emphasis). In seeking to unveil past injustices and their influence on the present, critique anticipates and so generally avoids being ‘fooled’ by texts’ structuring ideologies. “[T]he present paranoid consensus” in literary and cultural studies (Sedgwick, 2002, p.144) is especially visible in postcolonial literary studies wherein ‘criticality’ is central to our engagement with texts called postcolonial. Resistance – readerly or writerly – is valorised. Critics often compete for the most critical locations, marked by the anxious identification of structures of knowledge and feeling as imperial, the anticipation and denunciation of cultural biases, and the sometimes-egregious application of local knowledges. The critical reception of *Harare North* provides examples of each of these approaches. Dave Gunning emphasises that, because of the “Western” origins of clinical models of trauma, there is an “imperial logic behind much of the internationalization of trauma theory” (2015, p.124). Madhu Krishnan draws attention to the way in which the second person in the novel moves the reader to recreate the narrator’s performance of self, “revealing, beyond the performativity of the self, the ultimate performativity of the very categories of nation, self and other” (2014, p.49). Finally, three different critics read *Harare North* through the lens of ngozi (avenging spirit) despite no mention of the word and the novel’s use of mamhepo

and mudzimu to account for themes of spirit possession (see Gunning, 2015; Chigwedere, 2017; Musanga, 2017).

Professional reading may be a kind of affective management, but it is itself affectively-oriented, notwithstanding its “practice of disavowing its affective motive and force” (Sedgwick, 2002, p.138). It is motivated by the fear of being had – of not knowing, of being seen to not have known, and of the negative affects associated with such epistemic transformations being ontically ‘surfaced’ on the body of the critic. Here, I draw on Sara Ahmed’s (2004) influential conception of affects as ‘sticky’. Professional readers are wary of acknowledging the affects of reading because it involves surrendering not only authority, but the self and the privilege of self-representation. We do not always like what we see during the affective re-recognition of ourselves through the self-othering horizon of the text. Affect risks exposing professional critics as inexpert, or worse, uncritical. Consequently, we tend to disengage entirely from or retrospectively anticipate the ethics of reading in our published readings in order to gain more politically-preferable ground and retain authority over self-representation. And we get so good at this kind of purported disaffected critique that “we know how to conduct [it] in our sleep” (Felski, 2015, p.173). A potential issue with this approach is that it inhibits the transformative potential of reading. It forecloses important opportunities for epistemic and ontic recognition and reconstruction. The self is left intact. The paranoia of professional reading overdetermines and therefore forecloses the future (see Sedgwick, 2002, p.146). From this perspective, non-understanding’s registration of the affects of reading and the limits of self seems a necessary corrective to professional readers’ denial of affect and to self-safeguarding.

Having addressed the limits of a textualist treatment of non-professional non-understanding, let us now approach the same phenomenon from a materialist perspective.

G20's inability to understand *Harare North*, and their apparent disinterest in reading the novel again in order to gain greater understanding may lead us to conject that non-academic readerships do not possess sufficient time or opportunity to engage with texts. It may remind us that any assessment of non-professional readings must be sensitive to the particular material and institutional circumstances that precipitate (or not) reading. Two non-professional readers of *Harare North* explicitly refer to the time management required to read. G9 states merely that the novel was "[a] bit complicated for the level of attention I gave it. Grim too." They find the text difficult and either too time-consuming or unworthy of their attention. Less critical of the book, but also short on time, G24 writes in their review: "I am so excited to have found this book and now catching snippets of reading in between a hundred other things to do – brilliant". For this non-professional reader, reading takes place between activities deemed more urgent or important. They nonetheless implicitly conceptualise reading as important, itself a form of labour alongside the "hundred other things *to do*". Beyond the reception of *Harare North*, recent empirical studies of actual reading confirm this picture that time is key for reading. To focus on just England and the United Kingdom, one survey has as many as 45% of lapsed and non-readers in the United Kingdom citing a lack of time as a reason for not reading books, or not reading books more regularly (Billington, 2015, p.10). Furthermore, when non-professionals do read, they frequently cite relaxation and escapism as motivating factors (DJS Research, 2013, p.17), and most often read in bed (Billington, 2015, p.6; DJS Research, 2013, p.31). Both the ability to read and the act of reading are therefore shaped by material forces. Capitalist appropriations of labour devalue the labour of reading. Moreover, the capitalist world-system ensures that individuals are perpetually too exhausted to read books through the exploitation of their labour. This does not only apply to the working classes. I maintain that we should avoid inferring any stable or

shared class position from non-professionality. Literacy and reading are class privileges (McLaughlin, 1996, p.8). Goodreads and Amazon UK users can clearly access books, and possess the technology, time and confidence needed to disseminate their opinions to wider publics. Nonetheless, G9 and G24's responses clearly show that non-professional readers are generally denied opportunities to read as well as to intervene in systems of cultural evaluation.

From this materialist vantage point, G20's admission of non-understanding may be seen to testify to the distinctive material circumstances of non-professional readers in relation to professional readers. Non-professionals are systematically deprived of the time required to read because of the pressures of labour, while professional readers are free to enjoy reading as a legitimate (and culturally-prestigious) form of paid labour. This is not to say that professional literary critics do not engage in reading outside of working hours, and at times in less culturally-prestigious ways that our profession demands. Many of us are vociferous readers who enjoy reading in our spare time – including for the purposes of sleep and relaxation – and who many even have go-to 'genres', unrelated to our expertise, that support our engagement with reading as a ludic activity. But the kinds of readings that we share with publics in conference papers, journal articles, seminars and lectures tend to be those that derive from our research rather than our non-work-related abandon to literatures of all kinds, including thrillers, 'chic lit', period drama, popular non-fiction and celebrity autobiographies. Non-professionals, by contrast, can share only those readings that take place outside of work; albeit some like G24 may conceptualise reading fiction as a form of labour, especially those who participate in reading challenges

and book clubs, and those who read for socio-economic betterment or more nebulous self-improvement.¹³⁸

Though this kind of materialist analysis of non-understanding usefully comprehends the precipitating material conditions of non-professional reading compared with professional reading, it stops short of analysing the effectiveness of non-understanding as a response in its own terms. As such, it can run the risk of implying that non-professionals would read, and would read better, if they had the leisure afforded to professionals through employment. It continues to hold up professional reading as a standard, even if it understands how and why that standard will never be met.

These hypothetical, textualist and materialist approaches to explicit admissions of non-understanding tend to render non-understanding a symptom of reading failure. In this sense, they are diagnostic apparatus. By a textualist logic, non-understanding represents a failure of criticality and knowledge. By a materialist logic, non-understanding represents a failure of the necessary time and opportunity to read, and read well. One solution might be to think about non-understanding as not a failure of reading, but a viable reading in and of itself. For one thing, self-acknowledged non-understanding testifies to an act of reading having taken place. For another, and as we will see, self-acknowledged non-understanding entails an ethics and a politics of reading. Consequently, we might consider non-understanding as a ‘vernacular’ form of (self-)critique, where ‘vernacular’ is taken expansively to refer to “the practices of those who lack cultural power and who speak a critical language grounded in local concerns [i.e. knowledges and experiences of the self, but also the effects of capitalist exploitation and its appropriation of labour and

¹³⁸ Ranka Primorac has found that some Zambians read historical fiction like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half a Yellow Sun* (2006) for the purposes of improving their knowledge. In a complementary study, Jenni Ramone (2018) has registered the ways in which Nigerian fiction responds to the tendency among local readers to produce it as an instrument of knowledge by portraying instances of reading with reference to education and learning.

time on the individual], not the language spoken by academic knowledge-elites” (McLaughlin, 1996, pp.5-6).¹³⁹ Non-understanding is non-institutional, and is shaped by its material conditions. But it also critical and effective. It is a form of unregulated (self-)critique. Against delegitimisations of admissions of non-understanding as uneducated, and against admittedly sensitive accounts of the circumstances beyond readers’ own volition that may conspire to produce non-understanding, I therefore consider the efficacy of non-understanding as a response to postcolonial literatures.

In order to do so, we must reconstruct the possible reading process behind G20’s impression of non-understanding. Their reading self approaches the ending of the text. It is faced with imagery that is mutually conflicting, and that conflicts with its existing conception of narrative plot. It returns to the self-in-the-world in order to consult with existing knowledges and experiences that might help to discern the text’s opacity. The self-in-the-world supplies a range of relevant referents and schemas. The reading self approaches the text again with these knowledges and experiences, but continues to find itself unable to reconcile the text’s complex representation with any existing schemas that the self-in-the-world possesses. This feedback loop may occur several times. Eventually, the reading self and the self-in-the-world consent to non-understanding.

The reading self is therefore engaged in an attentive ethics of reading. It is reading from without the self. Further, it is open to reconstituting the self and the self’s existing experience and knowledge of the world through the horizon of the text. When the reading self subsequently approaches the text with the self-in-the-world’s supporting experiential

¹³⁹ There are problems with describing non-professional readers’ explicit responses of non-understanding as vernacular. The term ‘vernacular’ is derived from the Latin word, ‘vernāculus’ meaning “domestic, native, indigenous”, itself derived from ‘verna’ meaning “home-born slave, a native” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). It is reclaimed by Houston Baker in his coinage ‘vernacular theory’ to describe the blues’ effectiveness for understanding African-Americans experiences (McLaughlin, 1996, p.5). Here, I use Thomas McLaughlin’s more expansive definition advisedly to think about non-institutionalised practices of cultural criticism.

and epistemic information, it exposes the self-in-the-world to its own partiality. Existing schemas do not work here, the reading self expresses to the self-in-the-world. The text's structuring logics are different beyond the self's comprehension. The self-in-the-world is affected to recognise the limits of the self. Ultimately, the self-in-the-world suspends any ideal of mastery or authority. It consents to non-understanding. In so doing, it manifests the politics of reading and of knowledge. It conspires to recognise differences between the self and that otherness of the text. Yet, at the same time, it withholds the desire to assimilate the affective event of difference by any existing conception of difference. Self-acknowledged non-understanding in particular expresses no will to know better – no belief that, on a second reading, it *would* know better. Difference remains a “project” that is “beyond” the self (Bhabha, 2004, p.4). The text has defied the self's comprehension, and as such has shown the self its particular – that is, partial – material and epistemic situation. In non-understanding, we recognise that other readings, and other conceptions of difference, are always possible. We are humbled by the text. We find out that experience and knowledge is mediated. In this sense, non-understanding maintains the affects of reading. It remains open to “a spirit of revision and reconstruction” (Bhabha, 2004, p.4), whose particular form is as yet unguessed, unpredictable. In the absence of understanding, or fixity, affect can multiply – be connected and re-connected to later experiences, setting in motion new chains of affect.

This generous reading makes clear the potential advantages of non-understanding for the reading of postcolonial texts. First, limited and non-understanding can be important, situated responses to postcolonial texts that prevent pernicious forms of empathetic engagement and desires for mastery. Non-understanding may be an important avenue through which to consecrate literatures as postcolonial, precisely because it cedes some of the authority of self-representation to the text. Second, by contrast with the

disaffected tendencies of literary critique, non-professionals' confession of non-understanding is acutely affected. It is so open to feeling- and being-differently that it has not yet determined the nature of having been affected. Finally, non-understanding self-consciously bespeaks the partiality of reading. It recognises, where professional and non-professional readers fail, that both reading and the meaning of texts are legitimately diverse. Indeed, non-professional readers' admissions of non-understanding shed light on the limitations of professional reading paradigms. Because non-professionals tend "*not* [to] come out of a tradition of philosophical critique [they as vernacular critics] are capable of raising questions about the dominant cultural assumptions" (McLaughlin, 1996, p.5; emphasis added). The particular advantages of self-acknowledged non-understanding challenges the assumption that readers outside the academy are uncritical. But, they also raise serious questions about the authority with which we as critics read and speak about texts. Vernacular readings highlight the trappings of professional literary culture. They show that our authoritative readings may implicate us in the foreclosure of affect and the reproduction of the self and the self's existing experiential and epistemic archive.

To conclude this section, non-understanding is not necessarily incompatible with postcolonialism as a project of contesting imperial and neoimperial formations of knowledge, wealth, and power. Non-understanding can be an uninstitutionalised, vernacular (self-)critique, which is receptive to affect, and to difficult processes of self-recognition and self- and knowledge-reconstitution. Of course, we should not uncritically celebrate at large the possibilities of non-understanding. Non-understanding may at times harbour retrograde impulses. Readers may experience unrealised desires for mastery as humiliating, and disengage entirely from reading, or reading texts that they perceive may elicit similar negative affects. But my cursory analysis of non-understanding, inspired by

a *Harare North* reader's explicit confession of non-understanding, suggests that we as critics should remain sensitive to the potential efficacy of instances of non-understanding – whether in our own readings, or the readings of others.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that reading is a form of non-understanding. It has secondarily argued that non-understanding is not incompatible with postcolonialism. It has done so by legitimising a range of limited and contradictory responses to *Harare North*'s narrative voice and its narrative plot, and by exploring in detail one non-professional reader's explicit admission of non-understanding. In the process, this chapter has also complicated preconceptions about the relationship between geopolitical, cultural, linguistic, and institutional identity on the one hand, and practices of reading on the other. African readers read the text diversely. Non-African readers also read the text in a range of different ways. Professional readings are mutually discontinuous. Non-professional readings also vary. This chapter therefore continues the work of Chapters 1, 2 and 3 by delinking identity and reading. Notwithstanding, it has also registered the uniqueness of explicit non-understanding as one characteristically non-professional strategy of reading. Non-understanding is precisely produced by the conditions of non-professionality, i.e. a lack of access to institutionally-privileged forms of cultural expression, and a conception of reading as leisure rather than labour (and therefore less worthy of time). But it is not only a symptom. By reconstructing the possible reading process underpinning explicit non-understanding, I have shown the effectiveness of its ethics and politics.

In the wider context of this thesis, this chapter's articulation of reading as non-understanding is important for three main reasons. First, it questions the efficacy of

professional reading paradigms where the achievement of postcolonialism is concerned. It has shown that some postcolonial scholars harbour ‘neocolonial’ tendencies. But, more importantly, it has shown that professional reading, as a kind of affective management that insists on self-authority, sometimes undertakes the ethics of reading cautiously and sometimes forfeits a meaningful engagement with the politics of reading. Second, it reclaims non-understanding, which professional readers have broadly used to criticise non-professional readers, whether implicitly or explicitly. Consider Derek Attridge’s privileging of “educat[ed]” readings (2012, p.238), or Simon Gikandi’s (2000) implicit notion that reading is improved by the ability to identify intertextual references, and accurately characterise them as figurative or historical.¹⁴⁰ This chapter has shown not only that non-understanding is common to all readers, but also that non-understanding is a valuable response to postcolonial literatures. Thinking about non-understanding in this way democratises reading. It stimulates interest in non-professional readers as consecrators of literary value alongside professional readers, authors, cultural institutions and prizes. Third, and in light of these original contributions to knowledge, this chapter highlights the importance of allying often sophisticated theories of reading with empirical studies of reading. As the Conclusion will proceed to emphasise, postcolonial studies urgently needs to adopt empirical methodologies if it is going to continue to assess and advocate reading’s contestation of empire’s material and epistemic legacies.

¹⁴⁰ Chapter 1 discussed the issues with Attridge’s preference for ‘responsible reading’ and Gikandi’s valorisation of ‘reading the referent’ in more detail (see pgs. 20-24).

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the reading and reception of contemporary postcolonial literatures. Specifically, the thesis has applied an innovative, postcolonial rearticulation of reader-response theory to three reception case studies. By theoretically reconstructing the ways that we actually read, and engaging with actual responses to postcolonial literature, it has questioned the tendency of postcolonial scholars to valorise a small range of ideal reading practices. Indeed, this thesis has shown that postcolonialists' purported textualist or materialist reading-positions are essentially comfortable fictions that deny the hybridity of reading. This thesis has also intervened in postcolonial scholarship's tendency to uncritically denigrate 'Western', 'European', or non-professional readers as incapable of reading and realising postcolonial literatures. Moreover, against critical characterisations of non-professional readers as especially careless, as exoticists, and as neocolonial, this thesis has repeatedly shown that many non-professionals are in fact aesthetically-dexterous, critically-engaged and self-conscious in spite of the limitations of the form of the online book review.

This study has broadly shown that reading is a performance of the self. Our 'reading identities', to use Benwell, Procter and Robinson's (2012a) term, are informed by, but not reducible to our identities in the world. That is to say, there is no coherent 'Western' (or, for that matter, 'Muslim,' or 'Chinese,' or 'African') way of reading. Each case study of reading and reception has complicated the relationship between reading and identity. We have observed the diverse readings performed by Muslims, non-Muslims, Westerners, Africans (especially Zimbabwean readers), and non-Africans. Reading is never wholly determined in advance by identity. This is because reading is textual and

imaginative, as well as material and situated. The hybridity of reading generates possibilities for readers to recognise, critique and reconstruct themselves and their epistemic horizons. Reading is ethical. It provides opportunities for (self-)transformation and (self-)reconstitution. But it is also political. It encourages readers to recognise themselves, and to be sensitive to the material and epistemic circumstances that condition their reading – from the privilege of literacy and English-language fluency, to their cultural and institutional associations. Importantly, this thesis has shown that these ethical and political opportunities are not always taken up. My theory of reading and its application here democratises the reading of postcolonial literatures. But at the same time, it offers no guarantees that readers all engage with postcolonial texts in postcolonial ways, where ‘postcolonial’ refers to the contestation of empire’s material and epistemic legacies. In the interest of clarity, I will briefly recap the main claims of each chapter and their implications for our understanding of the reading and reception of postcolonial literatures. I will then proceed to identify avenues for further possible study. For the purposes of focus, I confine my interest to just three key outstanding research areas, directly raised by this study.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the ways in which postcolonial studies currently thinks about reading. Identifying issues with both a textualist paradigm and materialist paradigm, this chapter proceeded to develop reader-response theory in order to innovate a theory of reading postcolonial literatures. This theory of reading made four main claims. First, reading is intrinsically textual and material, as performed by readers who comprise a reading self and a self-in-the-world. Second, the textual activities of the reading self and the material activities of the self-in-the-world intersect because they are directed by individual readers. Third, reading is affective. Affects take place between the text, the reading self, and the self-in-the-world. Fourth, these affective intersections

manifest the interconnected politics and ethics of reading. This theory of reading was subsequently tested and refined through three case studies of the reading and reception of *The Satanic Verses*, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, and *Harare North*.

Chapter 2 rearticulated the Rushdie ‘affair’ as not primarily about cultural or religious differences. The ‘affair’ can also be understood as being about differences in reading. By close reading a range of responses to *The Satanic Verses*, the chapter showed that readers tend to make either textualist or materialist claims about the novel. Textualists celebrate the text as imaginative fiction. Materialists locate the narrative and its themes, as well as its author and the text itself, in the world. In the process, readers either find the novel offensive or creative fiction. Using my model of reading to reconstruct respondents’ reading processes, the chapter nonetheless highlighted that both materialist and textualist responses to the novel can be seen to be immanently hybrid. All responses are *both* material and textual. Furthermore, Chapter 2 showed that respondents either side of the ‘affair’ sometimes recognise the immanent hybridity of their readings. On this basis, the chapter performed a selective reading of the representation of Proper London in the opening pages of *The Satanic Verses* in order to identify the diverse ways in which readers might respond materially and textually to the city. My selective reading was intended to be indicative of how a calculatedly material *and* textual reading might operate.

Building on Chapter 2’s interest in how readers produce the space of Proper London, Chapter 3 considered reading as a spatial act. Specifically, Chapter 3 articulated reading as translation. It used ‘foreignisation’ to elaborate the spatial implications of the reading self’s textual activities. And it used ‘domestication’ to explore the spatial resonances of the self-in-the-world’s material activities. Foreignisation entails the transcendence of our location and our relationship to the spatial ‘standard’. Domestication is informed by the location of reading and the self’s relationship to the spatial ‘standard’.

This extension of my model of reading allowed us to register the diverse spatial acts committed by different readers during reading. Drawing on actual professional and non-professional responses to *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, I plotted the diverse ways in which readers foreignise and domesticate the text. At the same time, I highlighted that a variety of foreignising and domesticating acts seem to allow readers to recognise and contest their relationship to the spatial 'standard'. I argued that reading may allow readers to recognise the spatial 'standard' as a social construct which is non-identical with space, and which polices bodies and performances of space. Accordingly, Chapter 3 championed the intrinsic diversity of reading.

Chapter 4 further developed our understanding of the diverse practices of non-professional readers. It focused on the divergent reception of *Harare North* by professional and non-professional readers. It plotted the diverse ways in which readers comprehend the narrative voice and the narrative plot. Precisely because the chapter placed such readings in conversation, it highlighted that they are all limited readings of the text. Advancing a conception of reading as non-understanding, the chapter proceeded to evaluate the interpretive efficacy of explicit admissions of non-understanding. While acknowledging the institutional illegitimacy of non-understanding, and non-understanding's possible precipitating material conditions, I advocated the treatment of non-understanding not as a symptom of reading failure, but as an effective and affective reading of postcolonial literatures in and of itself. I reconstructed the reading process underpinning non-understanding in order to emphasise its committed ethics and politics. In this light, the association between non-understanding and non-professional readers need not testify to the latter's inability to engage with postcolonial texts. Moreover, non-understanding contains a useful yield in relation to the debates sparked by *The Satanic Verses*. If Rushdie's detractors largely claimed to operate on the basis of religious belief,

and if Rushdie's supporters mostly claimed to operate on the basis of secular non-belief, my thesis has arrived at the insight that the shared and productive non-understanding of *all* readers is a conceptual common-ground.

Precisely because of the significance of these findings, this thesis demonstrates the need for postcolonial studies to engage with reading in a more meaningful way. This may mean moving away from the theorisation of more and more ideal readings, and toward empirical studies of readers' actual responses to postcolonial literatures. To date, James Procter and Bethan Benwell's *Reading Across Worlds: Transnational Book Groups and the Reception of Difference* (2014) remains the only book-length study of the reception of postcolonial literatures. This study is complemented by empirical studies of local literary marketplaces and interconnected local reading practices by the likes of Ranka Primorac (2012), Jenni Ramone (2018), and Ashleigh Harris (2019). But studies of actual reading are clearly outpaced by the rampant development and deployment of critical reading approaches in postcolonial studies. We urgently require a more robust understanding of who reads, where reading takes place, what is read, and how readers read (including whether readers beyond the academy read postcolonial literatures as postcolonial literatures). Inevitably, my own study leaves several questions unanswered. In what remains of this conclusion, I highlight three key avenues for further study that arise from my project.

First, it is necessary to test my theory of reading on a greater range of texts in order to further develop it and to ensure its validity. Certainly, this thesis has refined the theory in relation to three texts and their reception contexts, and in doing so it has demonstrated the value of the model for considering the reception of postcolonial literatures. But it would be useful to apply my theory of reading more widely. For instance, the three texts considered here are all novels, and each narrates a migration to

London (or Proper London). In the present study, it was necessary to approach texts that are coherent in genre and narrative, but it is equally possible that my reading model will less adequately account for other genres of literature, and for texts which are not concerned with migration. As I highlighted in the Introduction, the narrative treatment of migration in these novels stages encounters between what is familiar and unfamiliar to characters, and what in turn is produced as familiar and unfamiliar to readers through the ethics and politics of reading. As such, I acknowledge that these texts may court particularly hybrid readings. There remains a need to explore the resonances of my theory of reading for the reception of a range of postcolonial literatures, unconcerned with migration. My sense is that my theory of reading would continue to be effective in describing the ways we respond to poetry, drama, memoir or otherwise. As I stated in the Introduction, genre is a construct that depends on affirmative reading practices (see pg.14). The notion of reading as hybrid is not based in any particular conception of novels or their affects. There is nothing to prevent audiences of a play reading in a similarly hybrid way. Notwithstanding my intuitive response to the question of genre, any application of my theory of reading to these forms would have to respond to these genres' different paratextual and reception contexts. The reception of performances of plays and poetry is clearly different than reading a novel. Moreover, the cultural institutions in which such performances take place may affect the kinds of 'readings' which are possible.

Second, it remains unclear to what extent paratextual features such as book covers motivate practices of reading. As I highlighted in Chapter 1, book covers can be exoticist (Huggan, 2001, p.107), can racialise authors (Young, 2006, p.4), and can encourage readers to read authors as (more or less reliable) racial, ethnic and/or cultural informants (see Brouillette, 2007, pp.65-68; Rogers, 2015, p.87). Future studies might therefore investigate whether book covers' representation of books and authors in these ways

actually influences the ways that readers understand given texts and their authors. Each of the texts analysed here has been published under different book covers. In Chapter 3 and 4, I projected different interpretive possibilities associated with these different book covers. Further research is needed to determine the significance of paratextual features on individual reading experiences and on the wider reception histories of which they form part. A future empirical study, for example, might compare responses to the same text, allocating different copies of the text featuring different cover designs to specific groups, and leaving one version of the text coverless as a control.

Finally, one could explore actual readings of postcolonial literatures in a more diverse range of social settings. This thesis has engaged with almost one thousand actual readings, now archived in new data sets. It retrieved these readings from world media, critical studies, personal blogs, and online Web 2.0 platforms Amazon UK and Goodreads. These different platforms allowed me to obtain data covertly. This is because there are no restrictions pertaining to the analysis of world media and scholarship, and because the data stored on personal blogs, Amazon UK, and Goodreads is ‘public’,¹⁴¹ and users of sites must be over 18.¹⁴² Covert data collection, creation and analysis mitigated the risks of data contamination. When researchers identify themselves as trained literary professionals to participants in the acquisition of informed consent, it can affect participants’ behaviour and make any data collected unreliable.¹⁴³ The challenges

¹⁴¹ See Eysenbach and Till on what constitutes ‘public’ data (2001, p.1104).

¹⁴² I eliminated platforms such as LibraryThing for this reason. Researchers interested in collecting data from LibraryThing, or producing new data sets for analysis based on its archives should take care to observe relevant data protection laws pertaining to under 18s as, unlike Goodreads and Amazon UK, LibraryThing allows EU users from 16 and over, and non-EU users from 13 and over. It may also be that case that researchers require informed consent from a parent or guardian before they can carry out research.

¹⁴³ Two recent studies of the reception of literatures in Lusaka, Zambia and Port of Spain, Trinidad testify to the challenges of acquiring reliable data in overtly ethnographic settings. Research participants can sometimes view the researcher as a cultural authority on literature and reading (see Primorac, 2012, p.506). Alternatively, participants can express concerns that researchers are overdetermining their identities and readings practices (see Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012a, p.52).

of empirical study notwithstanding, it would be useful to test my theory of reading and the arguments put forth by this study in a wider range of reading contexts, i.e. in different online settings, and in face-to-face settings such as reading groups or book clubs. This is especially the case because the online review format on Amazon UK and Goodreads is limited in its ability to represent individuals' readings (see Chapter 4, Section Two). Indeed, the sites have been criticised for exchanging "nuanced critique" for "crude quantitative measures" such as the star-rating system and upvoting (Murray, 2018, p.112). These online archives therefore might not accurately reflect the sophistication of non-professional readers. Reading may occur differently in different settings. In addition, my covert data collection methods have foreclosed opportunities to ask participants to clarify their readings. In future, informed consent may present a valuable route through which to better understand the ways that readers undertake reading.

I conclude this study by echoing Benwell, Procter and Robinson's call for a more sustained engagement with postcolonial literatures' reception, which necessarily takes into account the linguistic diversity of texts and audiences (2012b, p.2). Such future work must take seriously the role of non-professional readers in the consecration of cultural value. It must also be attentive to our historic implication in the marginalisation of such readers. A greater understanding of reading as it takes place globally will allow us to better assess the impact of individual texts and postcolonial literatures more broadly in the world. Do postcolonial literatures effectively challenge the material and epistemic legacies of empire? Only their readers can tell us. Of course, we might not always like what readers tells us – about ourselves, the texts that we prize, or the discipline we have so carefully crafted. But, if we can withstand tests of our authority and expertise, we may also be pleasantly surprised by, and may learn much from, the kinds of vernacular (self-)critique operated by some readers outside the academy.

References

- [Multiple Authors]. 1990. Women Against Fundamentalism Newsletter. **1**, pp.2-16.
- Abdallah, A. 1994. *For Rushdie: Essays by Arab and Muslim Writers in Defense of Free Speech*. New York: George Braziller.
- Abu-Lughod, I. Ahmad, E., Ali, A. S., Bilgrami, A., Said, E. W. and Spivak, G. 1989. Antithetical to Islam. *The New York Review of Books*. [Online]. 17 February. [Accessed 31 January 2017]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/17/opinion/1-antithetical-to-islam-121589.html>
- Adenekan, S. 2016. New Voices, New Media: Class, Sex and Politics in Online Nigerian and Kenyan Poetry. *Postcolonial Text*. **11** (1), pp.1-21.
- Adenekan, S. and Cousins, H. 2014. Class Online: Representations of African Middle-Class Identity. *Postcolonial Text*. **9** (3), pp.1-15.
- Afzal-Khan, F. 2002. Here Are the Muslim Feminist Voices, Mr. Rushdie! *Television and New Media*. **3** (2), pp.139-142.
- Agamben, G. 1998. The Paradox of Sovereignty. In: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. California: Stanford University Press, pp. 15-43.
- Ahmad, A. 1992. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. London: Verso.
- Ahmed, S. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London: Routledge.
- Ahmed, S. 2004. Affective Economies. *Social Text*. **22** (2), pp. 117-139.
- Ahsan, M. M. and Kidwai, A. R. 1993. *Sacrilege versus Civility: Muslim Perspectives on The Satanic Verses Affair*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- Akhtar, S. 1989. *Be Careful with Muhammad: The Salman Rushdie Affair*. London: Bellew Publishing.
- Alderson-Day, B., Bernini, M. and Fernyhough, C. 2017. Uncharted features and dynamics of reading: Voices, characters, and crossing of experiences. *Consciousness and Cognition*. **49**, pp.98-109.
- Alim, H. S. and Smitherman, G. 2012. *Articulate While Black: Barack Obama, Language and Race in the U.S.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, E. ed. 2007. *To Be Translated or not to be: PEN/IRL Report on the International Situation of Literary Translation*. Barcelona: Institut Ramon Llull.
- Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*. 1965. [Film]. Jean-Luc Godard. dir. Paris: StudioCanal.
- Amazon India. 2019. *2017: This Year in Reading Trends*. [Online]. [Accessed 01 May 2019]. Available from: <https://www.amazon.in/b?ie=UTF8&node=14471127031>

Amejoys. 2014. Book 5 review: A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers, Xiaolu Guo. [Online]. [Accessed 27 February 2019]. Available from: <http://allbookedup2014.blogspot.com/2014/02/book-5-review-concise-chinese-english.html>

Anker, E. S. and Felski, R. eds. 2017. Introduction. In: *Critique and Postcritique*. Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 1-28.

Appignanesi, L. and Maitland, S. 1989. *The Rushdie File*. London: Fourth Estate.

Apter, E. 2014. [2013]. Against World Literature. In: Damrosch, D. ed. *World Literature in Theory*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 345-362.

Armitage, D. 2001. Literature and Empire. In: Canny, N. ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. 1. The Origins of Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.99-123.

Armstrong, P. B. 1990. *Conflicting Readings: Variety and Validity in Interpretation*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.

Armstrong, P. B. 2000. The Politics of Play: The Social Implications of Iser's Aesthetic Theory. *New Literary History*. **31** (1), pp.211-223.

Armstrong, P. B. 2011. In Defense of Reading: Or, Why Reading Still Matters in a Contextualist Age. *New Literary History*. **42** (1), pp. 87-113.

Artemis, R. 2010. Breaking Totems and Taboos: Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. In: Bloom, H. ed. *The Taboo*. New York: Infobase, Bloom's Literary Criticism.

Asad, T. 1990. Ethnography, Literature, and Politics: Some Readings and Uses of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. *Cultural Anthropology*. **5** (3), pp. 239-269.

Asad, T. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. 2002 [1989]. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. London: Routledge.

Atherton, L. 2019. *a concise chinese-english dictionary for lovers (by xiaolu guo)*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 February 2019]. Available from: <https://www.scottmartinproductions.com/post/2019/04/25/review-of-a-concise-chinese-english-dictionary-for-lovers-by-xiaolu-guo>

Attridge, D. 2004. *The Singularity of Literature*. London: Routledge.

Attridge, D. 2012. Responsible Reading and Cultural Distance. In: Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp.234-244.

Barber, K. 2001. Audiences and the Book in Africa. *Current Writing*. **13** (2), pp.9-19.

Barendt, E. 2007. *Freedom of Speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barlow, T. E. ed. 1997. Introduction: On 'Colonial Modernity'. In: *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp.1-20.

Barthes, R. 1957. *The Blue Guide*. In: *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers. New York: The Noonday Press, pp.74-77.

- Barthes, R. 2002 [1978]. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard. London: Vintage.
- Bassnett, S. 2004. Travelling and Translating. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, **40**(2), pp.66-76.
- Bassnett, S. 2019. The Shifting Status of Authors in the World: Randomness and Unpredictability. The Garnet Rees Memorial Lecture. University of Hull. 3 April 2019.
- Bedford, C. 1992. Fact Fiction and the Fatwa. In: MacDonough, S. ed. *The Rushdie Letters: Freedom to Speak, Freedom to Write*. Ireland: Brandon Book Publishers, pp.125-183.
- Benjamin, W. 2002. The Task of the Translator. In: Bullock, M. and Jennings, M. W. eds. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: Volume 1 (1913-1926)*. Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. London and Durham: Duke University Press.
- Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. 2011. Not Reading *Brick Lane*. *New Formations*. **73** pp. 90-116.
- Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. 2012a. "That May Be Where I Come from but That's Now How I Read" Diaspora, Location and Reading Identities. In: *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp. 43-56.
- Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. 2012b. Introduction. In: *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-26.
- Bernard, C. and Swift, G. 1997. An Interview with Graham Swift. *Contemporary Literature*. **38** (2), pp.217-231.
- Bernstein, T. B. 1977. *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bernstein, T. P. 1977. *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Best, S. 2017. *La Foi Postcritique*, on Second Thought. *PMLA*, **132** (2), pp.337-343.
- Best, S. and Marcus, S. 2009. Surface Reading: An Introduction. *Representations*. **108** (1), pp.1-21.
- Bewes, T. 2010. Reading with the Grain: A New World in Literary Criticism. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. **21** (3), pp.1-33.
- Bhabha, H. 2004 [1994]. *The Location of Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge Classics.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1985. Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817. *Critical Enquiry*, **12** (1), pp. 144-165.
- Bhabha, H. K. 2008. Foreword to the 1986 edition by Homi K. Bhabha. In: Fanon, F. ed. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, pp.xxi-xxxvii.
- Billington, J. 2015. *Reading Between the Lines: The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure*. Liverpool, Galaxy Quick Reads in association with the University of Liverpool.

- Birthwright, E. V. 2011. Reggae as a Rastafari Poetic of Disenchantment. In: Dunkley, D. A. ed. *Readings in Caribbean History and Culture: Breaking Ground*. Maryland: Lexington, pp. 255-273.
- Bloom, H. 2003. *Salman Rushdie*. Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Boehmer, E. 2005 [1995]. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boehmer, E. 2018. *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-Century Critical Readings*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boehmer, E. and Davies, D. 2015. Literature, Planning and Infrastructure: Investigating the Southern City through Postcolonial Texts. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. **51** (4), pp.395-409
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2011. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brass, P. R. ed. 2003. Hindu-Muslim Violence in India and Aligarh. In: *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp.60-115.
- Brecht, B. 2007. *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, trans. Steve Giles. Methuen Drama.
- Brennan, T. 1989. *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brook, T. 2016. *The Asiatic Mode of Production in China*. London: Routledge.
- Brook, T. and Wakabayashi, B. T. eds. 2000. Introduction: Opium's History in China. In: *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*. London: University of California Press, pp. 1-27.
- Brouillette, S. 2007. *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brouillette, S. 2017. *On the African Literary Hustle*. [Online]. [Accessed 16 April 2019]. Available from: <https://blindfieldjournal.com/2017/08/14/on-the-african-literary-hustle/>
- Brouillette, S. 2019. Finally read Eve Sedgwick on "reparative reading." Enjoyed it. My main response -- shocking! -- is that I remain on the side of something like paranoid reading, despite having little of the "faith in demystifying exposure" that Sedgwick says is part of the paranoid mode. [Twitter]. 34 May. [24 May 2019]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/brouillette/status/1131701595081728000>
- Brown, P. and Levison, S. C. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bulson, E. 2007. *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000*. New York: Routledge.
- Bulwer-Lytton, E. [1839]. 1986. *Richelieu: Or, The Conspiracy; a Play, in Five Acts*. Boston: Baker & Co. [Digital archive].

- Bush, R. and Krishnan, M. 2016. Print Activism in Twenty-First-Century Africa. *Wasafiri*. **31** (4), pp.1-2.
- Butler, J. and Athanasiou, A. 2013. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political: Conversations with Athena Athanasiou*. Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Buuck, D. 1997. African Doppelganger: Hybridity and Identity in the Work of Dambudzo Marechera. *Research in African Literatures*. **28** (2), pp.118-131.
- Buurma, R. S. and Heffernan, L. 2012. The Common Reader and the Archival Classroom: Disciplinary History for the Twenty-First Century. *New Literary History*. **43** (1), pp. 113-135.
- Cadwalladr, C. 2007. 'Heathlow airport? Oh how we laughed.' *The Guardian*. [Online]. 11 February. [Accessed 15 February 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/feb/11/fiction.features2>
- Caracciolo, M. 2011. The Reader's Virtual Body: Narrative Space and its Reconstruction. *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*. **3**, pp.117-138.
- Casanova, P. 2004. *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chambers, C. and Watkins, S. n.d. '[Introduction to Online Special Issue: *The Satanic Verses*].' *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. [Online]. n.d. [Accessed 24 November 2017]. Available from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/page/jcl/collections/online-special-issue-satanic-verses>
- Chattopadhyay, S. 2018. From Indianness to Englishness: The foreign selves of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, and Salman Rushdie's Salahuddin Chamchawala. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. **53** (3) pp. 1-18.
- Chigwedere, Y. 2017. The Wretched of the Diaspora: Traumatic Dislocation in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. *Journal of the African Literature Association*. **11** (2), pp.169-182.
- Chikwava, B. 2010 [2009]. *Harare North*. London: Vintage.
- Chow, R. ed. 2014. Introduction: Skin tones – about language, postcoloniality, and racialization. In: *Not like a native speaker: on languaging as a postcolonial experience*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 1-17.
- Chun, Z. 2014. *China-Zimbabwe Relations: A Model of China-Africa Relations?* [Online]. [Accessed 19 December 2019]. Available from: africaportal.org
- Connolly, C. 1990. Review: Sacred Cows by Fay Weldon. *Feminist Review*. **35**, pp.113-118.
- Cook, D. 1986. Translation as a Reading. *British Journal of Aesthetics*. **26** (2), pp.143-149.
- Craige, B. J. ed. 1996. Introduction: Tribalism and Political Dualism. In: *American Patriotism in a Global Society*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp.1-20.
- Crane, M. T. 2009. Surface, Depth, and the Spatial Imaginary: A Cognitive Reading of The Political Unconscious. *Representations*. **108** (1), pp.76-97.

- Craps, S. 2013. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma out of Bounds*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crowley, T. 2003. *Standard English and the Politics of Language*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crowley, Tony. 1991. *Proper English? Readings in Language, History and Cultural Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Damrosch, D. 2003. What is World Literature? *World Literature Today*. **77** (1), pp. 9-14.
- Davies, P. ed. 1997. Introduction: Not on the Run. In: *Real Voices on Reading*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. xiii-xvii.
- Davis, C. 2013. *Creating the Postcolonial: African Writers and British Publishers*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- de Certeau, M. 1988. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Deleuze, G. 1997. *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Michael A. Greco and Daniel W. Smith. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 2003. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum.
- Derrida, J. 1981. *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1997. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Dirlik, A. 2014. Mao Zedong Thought and the Third World/Global South. *Interventions*. **16** (2), pp.233-256.
- DJS Research. 2013. *Booktrust Reading Habits Survey 2013: A National Survey of Reading Habits & Attitudes to Books amongst Adults in England*. Cheshire: Booktrust.
- Doloughan, F. 2009. Text design and acts of translation: The art of textual remaking and generic transformation. *Translation and Interpreting Studies*. **4**(1), pp.101-115.
- Doloughan, F. 2015. The Construction of Space in Contemporary Narrative. *Journal of Narrative Theory*. **45** (1), pp.1-17.
- Donadio, R. 2007. Fighting Words on Sir Salman. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 15 July. [Accessed 29 October 2019]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/books/review/15donadio.html>
- Drew, D. 1963. The History of Mahagonny. *The Musical Times*, **104** (1439), pp. 18-24.
- Driscoll, B. 2016. Readers of Popular Fiction and Emotion Online. In: Gelder, K. ed. *New Directions in Popular Fiction: Genre, Distribution, Reproduction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.425-449.
- Driscoll, B. and Rehberg Sedo, D. 2018. Faraway, So Close: Seeing the Intimacy in Goodreads Reviews. *Qualitative Inquiry*, **25** (3), pp.248-259.
- Duri, F. P. T. 2018. 'Green Bombers,' Torture and Terror: Political Security and the Nazi Legacy in Zimbabwe, 2001-2009. In: Mawere, M. ed. *Development Naivety and*

Emergent Insecurities in a Monopolised World: The Politics and Sociology of Development in Contemporary Africa. Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, pp.35-76.

Duttrion, M. 2012. *A propos d'Harare North. Une conversation avec Brian Chikwawa*. [Online]. 04 October. [Accessed 08 July 2019]. Available from: <http://malfini.ens-lyon.fr>

Edmonds, E. B. 1998. Dread 'I' In-a-Babylon: Ideological Resistance and Cultural Revitalization. In: eds. Murrell, N. S., Spencer, W. D., and McFarlane, A. A. eds. *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp.23-35.

Edward, S. 2018. On the Imperialist 'Charity' of Rebuilding Caribbean Children's Libraries with Eurocentric Books. *The Millions*. [Online]. 30 July. [Accessed 24 April 2019]. Available from: <https://themillions.com/2018/07/imperialist-charity-of-rebuilding-caribbean-childrens-libraries-with-eurocentric-books.html>

Elie, P. 2014. A Fundamental Fight. *Vanity Fair*. [Online]. 29 April. [Accessed 01 February 2017]. Available from: <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2014/05/salman-rushdie-ian-mcwean-martin-amis-satanic-verses-fatwa>

English, J. 2005. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Eysenbach, G. and Till, J. E. 2001. Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research on Internet Communities. *British Medical Journal*. **323**, pp.1103-1105.

Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, F. 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.

Faris, N. A. 1952. *The Book of Idols or The Kitāb al-Aṣṇām*, trans. Hishām Ibn-Al-Kalbi. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Felski, R. 2015. *The Limits of Critique*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Fischer, M. M. J. and Abedi, M. 1990. Bombay Talkies, the Word and the World: Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. *Cultural Anthropology*. **5** (2), pp. 107-159.

Fluck, W. 2000. The Search for Distance: Negation and Negativity in Wolfgang Iser's Literary Theory. *New Literary History*. **31** (1), pp.175-210.

Fludernik, M. 1994. Second-Person Narrative as a Test Case for Narratology: The Limits of Realism. *Style*. **28** (3), pp.445-479.

Fraser, B. 1990. Perspectives on Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*. **14**, pp.219-236.

Fraser, R. 2008. *Book History Through Postcolonial Eyes: Rewriting the Script*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Freud, S. 1997. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions.

Freud, S. 2001a. Fetishism. In: Strachey, J. ed. and trans., in collab. with Freud, A. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Volume XXI)*. London: Vintage.

- Freud, S. 2001b. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. In: Strachey, J. ed. and trans., in collab. with Freud, A. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Volume VII)*. London: Vintage.
- Fuller, D. and Rehberg Sedo, D. eds. 2019. Themed Section 1: Readers, Reading and Digital Media. *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*. **16** (1), pp.130-509.
- Fuller, D., Rehberg Sedo, D. and Squires, C. 2011. Marionettes and Puppeteers? The Relationship between Book Club Readers and Publishers. In: Rehberg Sedo, D. ed. *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 181-199.
- Gabriel, J. 1994. History as Present: Present as History. In: *Racism, Culture Markets*. London: Routledge, pp.11-41.
- Gane, G. 2002. Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in *The Satanic Verses*. *Modern Fiction Studies*. **48** (1), pp.18-49.
- Gavins, J. 2007. *Text World Theory: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Genette, G. 1997. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibbons, A. 2012. *Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature*. London: Routledge.
- Gikandi, S. 2000. Reading the Referent: Postcolonialism and the Writing of Modernity. In: Nasta, S. ed. *Reading the 'New' Literatures in a Postcolonial Era*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, pp. 87-104.
- Gilmour, R. 2012. Living between Languages: The Politics of Translation in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* and Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. **47** (2), pp.207-227.
- Golooba-Mutebi, F. 2018. Critics of China in Africa are recycling Yellow-Peril myths. *The EastAfrican.co.ke*. [Online]. 17 August. [Accessed 18 January 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/oped/comment/Critics-of-China-in-Africa-are-recycling-Yellow-Peril-myths/434750-4717056-105a076/index.html>
- Graff, G. 1987. *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Grant, D. 1999. *Salman Rushdie*. Devon: Northcote House.
- Gregg, M. and Seigworth, G. 2010. *The Affect Theory Reader*. London: Duke University Press.
- Griswold, W. 2000. *Bearing Witness: Readers, Writers, and the Novel in Nigeria*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Grobe, C. 2016. On Book: The Performance of Reading. *New Literary History*. **47** (4), pp. 567-589.
- Groes, S. 2011. *The Making of London: London in Contemporary Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Guardian Research Department. 2012. November 1997: Rushdie and le Carré in literary spat. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 12 November. [Accessed 19 September 2017]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2012/nov/12/salman-rushdie-john-le-carre-archive-1997>
- Gunning, D. 2015. Dissociation, Spirit Possession, and the Languages of Trauma in Some Recent African-British Novels. *Research in African Literatures*. **46** (4), pp.119-132.
- Guo, X. 2008 [2007]. *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. London: Vintage.
- Guo, X. 2008 [2007]. *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Guo, X. 2017. Writing across cultures. *Medium*. [Online]. 09 July. [Accessed 24 September 2017]. Available from: <https://medium.com/@OUFreeLearning/writing-across-cultures-fd191d0c0a33>
- Hall, S. 1990. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: Rutherford, J. ed. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, pp.222-237.
- Hanes, W. T. and Sanello, F. 2002. *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks inc.
- Hannah, S. 2018. It's no mystery that crime is the biggest-selling genre in books. *Guardian*. [Online]. 12 April. [Accessed 01 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2018/apr/12/mystery-crime-fiction-bestselling-book-genre-sophie-hannah>
- Hantzis, D. 1988. *You Are About to Begin Reading': The Nature and Function of Second Person Point of View in Narrative*. PhD Thesis, Louisiana State University.
- Harley, J. B. 1989. Deconstructing the Map. *Cartographica*. **26** (2), pp. 1-20.
- Harris, A. 2008. Discourses of Dirt and Disease in Operation Murambatsvina. In: Vambe, M. T. ed. *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina*. Harare: Weaver Press, pp. 40-50.
- Harris, A. 2014. Awkward Form and Writing the African Present. *The Salon*. **7**, pp.3-8.
- Harris, A. 2019. Hot Reads, Pirate Copies, and the Unsustainability of the Book in Africa's Literary Future. *Postcolonial Text*. **14** (2), 1-15.
- Harvey, D. 2003. The Right to the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. **27** (4), pp. 939-941.
- Haugh, M. and Kádár, D. Z. 2017. Intercultural (Im)Politeness. In: Culpeper, J., Haugh, M. and Kádár, D.Z. eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Linguistic (Im)politeness*. London: Palgrave. Pp. 601-632.
- Hayler, M. 2016. Matter Matters: The Effects of Materiality and the Move from Page to Screen. Griffin, G. and Hayler, M. eds. *Research Methods for Reading Data in the Digital Humanities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.14-35.
- Hepple, A. 2007. South Africa's censorship laws. *Index on Censorship*. **4** (2), pp.38-40.
- Herman, D. 2013. *Storytelling and the Science of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Hevia, J. L. 2003. *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hilbert, M. 2011. *Youth, Citizenship and the Production of Dangerous Communities: Representations of Young Muslims in Britain and Germany*. Master's Thesis, University of Birmingham.
- Hill, J. H. 1998. Language, Race, and White Public Space. *American Anthropologist*, **100** (3), pp. 680-689.
- Hindess, B. and Hirst, P. 1975. *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hirsch, A. 2018. The Fantasy of 'Free Speech'. *Prospect Magazine*. [Online]. 16 February. [Accessed 29 October 2019]. Available from: <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/the-fantasy-of-free-speech>
- Hofmeyr, I., and Kriel, L. 2006. Book History in Southern Africa: What Is It and Why Should It Interest Historians? *South African Historical Journal*. **55** (1), 1–19.
- Holland, B. 1995. OPERA REVIEW; 'Mahagonny,' an Apt Metaphor for Political Chaos in Any Era. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 27 November. [Accessed 27 October 2018]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/27/arts/opera-review-mahagonny-an-apt-metaphor-for-political-chaos-in-any-era.html>
- Huggan, G. 1997. (Post)Colonialism, Anthropology, and the Magic of Mimesis. *Cultural Critique*. 38, pp.91-106.
- Huggan, G. 2001. *The Postcolonial Exotic*. London: Routledge.
- Huggan, G. 2012. A Preface: Reflections on *The Postcolonial Exotic*. In: Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp. xiii-xvi.
- Innes, C. L. 2007. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Irvine, M. 1994. *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory 350-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Iser, W. 1978. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Iser, W. 1993. *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press.
- Iser, W. 2000. *The Range of Interpretation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jackson, J-M. 2017. New African literature is disrupting what Western presses prize. *The Conversation*. [Online]. 9 October. [Accessed 16 April 2019]. Available from: <https://theconversation.com/new-african-literature-is-disrupting-what-western-presses-prize-85206>
- Jakobson, R. 1959. On Linguistic Aspects of Translation. In: Brower, R. A. ed. *On Translation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 232-239.

- Jameson, F. 1981 [2002]. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London and New York: Routledge Classics.
- Jameson, F. 1986. Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism. *Social Text*. 15, pp.65-88.
- Jeffries, S. 2006. Lie Back and Think of Jesus. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 5 September. [Accessed 24 October 2019]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/sep/05/gender.religion>
- Kaufman, M. T. 1989. Literary World Lashes Out After a Week of Hesitation. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 22 February. [Accessed 17 February 2017]. Available from: <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/04/18/specials/rushdie-literary.html>
- Keen, S. 2006. A Theory of Narrative Empathy. *Narrative*. 14 (3), pp. 207-236
- Keen, S. 2007. *Empathy and the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khair, T. 2016. *The New Xenophobia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Knowledge Teya. 2017. Kalanga or Karanga: What's in a name? *The Patriot*. [Online]. 2 November. [Accessed 08 December 2019]. Available from: https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/kalanga-or-karanga-whats-in-a-name/
- Kociejowski, M. 2011. A Tree Grows in Brixton: Brian Chikwava's Dark Adventure in Harare North. *Wasafiri*. 26 (3), pp. 55-60.
- Koegler, C. 2018. *Critical Branding: Postcolonial Studies and the Market*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Krishnan, M. 2014. *Contemporary African Literature in English: Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kuiken, D., Miall, D. S. and Sikora, S. 2004. Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading. *Poetics Today*, 25 (2), pp.171-203.
- La'Porte, V. 1999. *An Attempt to Understand the Muslim Reaction to The Satanic Verses*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Lakshmi, V. 1992. Rushdie's Fiction: The World Beyond the Looking Glass. In: Nelson, E. S. ed. *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pp. 149-155.
- Latour, B. 2005. Third Source of Uncertainty: Objects too Have Agency. In: *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 63-86.
- Le Guin, U. K. 2007. Sorry of my English. *The Guardian*. [Online]. 27 January. [Accessed 07 March 2018]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jan/27/featuresreviews.guardianreview33>
- le Roux, E. 2012. Does the North Read the South? The International Reception of South African Scholarly Texts. In: Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp.73-85.
- le Roux, E. 2018. Miriam Tlali and Ravan Press: Politics and Power in Literary Publishing during the Apartheid Period. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 44 (3), pp.431-446.

- Learn101. 2018. Shona Grammar. [Online]. [Accessed 17 July 2019]. Available from: <http://learn101.org/>
- Lee, H. and Shalmon, D. 2008. Searching for Oil: China's Oil Strategies in Africa. In: Rotberg, R. ed. *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, pp.109-137.
- Lefebvre, H. 1991. *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Littau, K. 2019. *From Print to Pixels: The Many Futures of Reading*. Readers and Reading in the Book, 27 March. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds.
- Livings, J. 2005. Interview: Salman Rushdie, The Art of Fiction No. 186. *The Paris Review*. [Online]. 14 February. [Accessed 29 October 2016]. Available from: <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5531/the-art-of-fiction-no-186-salman-rushdie>
- Love, H. 2010. Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn. *New Literary History*, **41** (2), pp.371-391.
- Love, H. 2010. Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading. *Criticism*, **52** (2), pp.235-241.
- Love, H. 2017. 'Critique is Ordinary'. *PMLA*. **132** (2), pp.364-370.
- Low, G. 2011. *Publishing the Postcolonial: Anglophone West African and Caribbean Writing in the UK 1948–1968*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- MacFarquhar, R. and Schoenhals, M. 2008. *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Malik, K. 2009a. Exploding the fatwa myths. *Guardian*. [Online]. 09 February. [Accessed 29 November 2018]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/feb/09/religion-islam-fatwa-khomeini-rushdie>
- Malik, K. 2009b. *From fatwa to jihad: the Rushdie affair and its legacy*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Mangena, T. and Nyambi, O. 2013. Language Use and Abuse: The English Language in Chikwava's *Harare North* and Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly*. *NAWA: Journal of Language and Communication*. **7** (1), pp.75-85.
- Mano, W. 2016. Engaging with China's Soft Power in Zimbabwe: Harare Citizen's Perceptions of China-Zimbabwe Relations. In: Zhang, X., Wasserman, H. and Mano, W. *China's Media and Soft Power in Africa: Promotions and Perceptions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.163-180.
- Marechera, D. 1978. *The House of Hunger*. London: Heinemann African Writers Series.
- Marechera, D. 2013 [1978]. *The House of Hunger*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Marx, K. 1973 [1939]. *Grundrisse: Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus. New York: First Vintage Books.

- Marx, K. 1976 [1867]. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Volume One)*, trans. Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, New Left Review.
- Mason, J. 2019. *Intertextuality in Practice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Mason, T. O. 1998. The African-American Anthology: Mapping the Territory, Taking the National Census, Building the Museum. *American Literary History*. **10** (1), pp.185-98.
- Massey, D. 1995 [1984]. *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. New York: Routledge.
- Massumi, B. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Massumi, B. 2003. Notes on the translation and acknowledgements. In: Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. eds. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum.
- Massumi, B. 2015. *The Politics of Affect*. London: Polity Press.
- McCann, F. 2014. Uncommonly Other in Belfast, London and Harare: AlieNation in Robert McLiam Wilson's *Ripley Bogle* and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*. **37** (1), p.67-78.
- McClintock, A. 1995. Psychoanalysis, Race and Female Fetishism. In: *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.181-203.
- McDonald, P. D. 2009. *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McDonald, P. D. 2010. The Ethics of Reading and the Question of the Novel: The Challenge of J. M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year*. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*. **43** (3), pp. 483-499.
- McDonald, R. 2018. Critique and Anti-Critique. *Textual Practice*. **32** (3), pp.365-374.
- McLaren, P. and Leonard, P. 1993. *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. London: Routledge.
- McLaughlin, T. 1996. Introduction – Theory Outside the Academy: Street Smarts and Critical Theory. In: *Street Smarts and Critical Theory: Listening to the Vernacular*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, pp.3-30.
- McLeod, J. 2004. *Postcolonial London*. London: Routledge.
- McLeod, J. 2010 [2000]. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- McLeod, J. 2017. Postcolonial Studies and the Ethics of the Quarrel. *Paragraph*. **40** (1), pp.97-113.
- McLoughlin, S. 2002. Recognising Muslims: Religion, Ethnicity and Identity Politics in Britain. *Cahiers d'Études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le monde Turco-Iranien (CEMOTI)*. **33**, pp. 43-56.

- McLoughlin, S. 2005. The State, New Muslim Leaderships and Islam as a Resource for Public Engagement in Britain. In: Cesari, J. and McLoughlin, S. eds. *European Muslims and the Secular State*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 55-69.
- Meighoo, S. 2008. Derrida's Chinese Prejudice. *Cultural Critique*, **68**, pp.163-209.
- Mill, J. S. 1859. *On Liberty*. London: Parker and Son.
- Miller, J. 1782. *Mahomet the Imposter: A Tragedy*. Edinburg: Apollo Press, by the Martins, for Bell, London.
- Miller, J. H. 1987. The Ethics of Reading. *Style*. **21** (2), pp.181-191.
- Miller, J. H. 2002. *On Literature (Thinking in Action)*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Mill, J. S. 2001. [1859]. *On Liberty*. Kitchener: Batoche Books.
- Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. 2002. *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. London: Routledge.
- Mishra, V. 2009. Postcolonial Differend: Diasporic Narratives of Salman Rushdie. In: Bloom, H. ed. *Salman Rushdie*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, pp. 63-98.
- Modood, T. 1993. Muslim Views on Religious Identity and Racial Equality. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. **19** (3), pp.513-519.
- Modood, T. 2003. Muslims and the Politics of Difference. In: Spencer, S. ed. *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp.100-115.
- Modood, T. 2006. British Muslims and the Politics of Multiculturalism. In: Modood, T., Triandafyllidou, A. and Zapata-Barrero, R. eds. *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship*. London: Routledge, pp.37-56.
- Mondal, A. A. 2013. 'Representing the very ethic he battled': Secularism, Islam(ism) and Self-transgression in *The Satanic Verses*. *Textual Practice*. **27** (3), pp. 419-437.
- Muchemwa, K. Z. 2010. Old and New Fictions: Rearranging the Geographies of Urban Space and Identities in Post-2006 Zimbabwean Fiction. *English Academy Review*. **27** (2), pp.134-145.
- Mufti, A. 1991. Reading the Rushdie Affair: An Essay on Islam and Politics. *Social Text*. **29**, pp.95-116.
- Mukherjee, A. P. 1990. Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Postmodernism? *World Literature in English*. **30** (2), pp. 1-9.
- Murray, S. 2018. *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing, and Selling Books in an Internet Era*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Murrell, N. S. 1998. Introduction: The Rastafari Phenomenon. In: Spencer, N. S., Spencer, W. D., and McFarlane, A. A. eds. *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp.1-19.
- Musanga, T. 2017. 'Ngozi' (Avenging Spirit), Zimbabwean Transnational Migration, and Restorative Justice in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009). *Journal of Black Studies*. **48** (8), pp.775-790.

- Nakamura, L. 2013. 'Words with Friends': Socially Networked Reading on *Goodreads*. *PMLA*. **128** (1), pp.239-243.
- Ndlovu, I. 2016. Language and Audience in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009). *English Academy Review*. **33** (2), pp.29-42.
- Nesbitt-Ahmed, Z. 2017. Reclaiming African literature in the Digital Age: An Exploration of Online Literary Platforms. *Critical African Studies*. **9** (3), pp.377-390.
- Newell, S. 2010. Corresponding with the City: Self-Help Literature in Urban West Africa. In: Primorac, R. ed. *African City Textualities*. London: Routledge. pp.17-37.
- Nicholls, B. 2010. Reading against the Grain (of Wheat). In: *Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Gender, and the Ethics of Postcolonial Reading*. Surrey: Ashgate, pp.85-115.
- Nicholls, B. 2013. Postcolonial Narcissism, Cryptopolitics, and Hypnocritique: Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*. *Postcolonial Text*. **8** (2), pp.1-22.
- Nicholls, B. 2019. [Pre-print]. Africas of the Mind: From Vernacular Theory to Planetary Autopsychoanalysis. *Cultural Critique*. 28p.
- Noxolo, P. 2014. Towards an Embodied Securityscape: Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and the Asylum Seeking Body as Site of Articulation. *Social & Cultural Geography*. **15** (3), pp.291-312
- Noyes, J. 1992. *Colonial Space: Spatiality in the discourse of German South West Africa 1884-1915*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Noyes, J. 2004 Nomadism, Nomadology, Postcolonialism: By way of introduction. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. **6** (2), pp.159-168.
- Nwaubani, A. T. 2014. African Books for Western Eyes. *The New York Times*. [Online]. 28 November. [Accessed 16 April 2019]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/30/opinion/sunday/african-books-for-western-eyes.html>
- O'Connor, R. 2019. The 20 books Brits lie about reading the most, from War and Peace to 1984. *Independent*. [Online]. 07 October. [Accessed 01 December 2019]. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/best-books-most-read-uk-war-peace-lie-1984-a9145946.html>
- Oboe, A. 2013. Language, Eros and Culture in Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. In: Dolce, M. R., Riem Natale, A., Mercanti, S., Colomba, C. eds. *The Tapestry of the Creative Word in Anglophone Literatures*. Udine: Forum Editrice Universitaria Udinese, pp.267-279.
- OECD. 2016. *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*. OECD Skills Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Oxford English Dictionary. [Online]. 3rd ed. 2019. s.v. Translate, np. [Accessed 19 January 2019]. Available from: www.oed.com
- Oxford English Dictionary. [Online]. 3rd ed. 2019. s.v. Vernacular, np. [Accessed 14 October 2019]. Available from: www.oed.com
- Oyedeji, K. 2013. Out of the Frying Pan.... *Wasafiri*. **28** (4), pp.47-52

- Parashkevova, V. 2012. *Salman Rushdie's Cities: Reconfigurational Politics and the Contemporary Urban Imagination*. London: Continuum.
- Parekh, B. 1989. Between Holy Text and Moral Void. *New Statesman and Society*. 24 March, pp. 29-33.
- Parekh, B. 2017. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. London: Red Globe Press.
- Parry, B. 2004. The Institutionalization of Postcolonial Studies. Lazarus, N. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.66-80.
- Perchand, A. 2016. The Fatwa and the Philosophe: Rushdie, Voltaire, and Islam. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. **51** (3), pp. 465-482.
- Pike, D. L. 2002. Modernist Space and the Transformation of London. In: Gilbert, P. K. ed. *Imagined Londons*. New York: State University of New York Press, pp.101-119.
- Pipes, D. 2003. *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Poon, A. 2013. Becoming a Global Subject: Language and the Body in Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. *Transnational Literature*. **6** (1), pp.1-9.
- Potts, D. 2006. 'Restoring Order'? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. **32** (2), pp. 273-291.
- Primorac, P. 2012. Reasons for Reading in Postcolonial Zambia. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. **48** (5), pp.497-511.
- Primorac, R. 2010. Southern States: New Literature from and about Southern Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. **36** (1), pp.247-253.
- Procter, J. 2006. 'The Ghost of Other Stories': Salman Rushdie and the Question of Canonicity? In: Low, G. and Wynne-Davies, M. eds. *A Black British Canon?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.35-49.
- Procter, J. 2009. Reading, Taste and Postcolonial Studies: Professional and Lay Readers of *Things Fall Apart*. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. **11** (2), pp.180-98.
- Procter, J. and Benwell, B. 2014. *Reading Across Worlds: Transnational Book Groups and the Reception of Difference*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pucherová, D. 2012. 'A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last': Notes on the Caine Prize. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. **48** (1), pp.13-25.
- Pucherová, D. 2015. Forms of Resistance against the African Postcolony in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. *Brno Studies in English*. **41** (1), pp.157-173.
- Pullinger, K. 2008. Digital fiction: from the page to the screen. In: Adams, R. ed. *Transdisciplinary Digital Art: Sound, Vision and the New Screen*. New York, NY: Springer, pp.120-126.

- Rahim, S. 2012. The Satanic Verses and me. *The Telegraph*. [Online]. 10 September. [Accessed: 20 November 2017]. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9523983/The-Satanic-Verses-and-me.html>
- Ramone, J. 2013. Salman Rushdie and Translation. London: Bloomsbury.
- Ramone, J. and Cousins, H. 2011. *The Richard & Judy Book Club Reader: Popular Texts and the Practices of Reading*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Ramone, J. ed. 2018. The Postcolonial Book Market: Reading and the Local Literary Marketplace. In: *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Postcolonial Writing: New Contexts, New Narratives, New Debates*. London: Bloomsbury, pp.71-87.
- Ramone, J. ed. 2018. The Postcolonial Book Market: Reading and the Local Literary Marketplace. In: *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Postcolonial Writing: New Contexts, New Narratives, New Debates*. London: Bloomsbury. pp.71-87.
- Ranasinha, R. 2007a. *South Asian Writers in Twentieth-Century Britain: Culture in Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ranasinha, R. 2007b. The Fatwa and its Aftermath. In: Gurnah, A. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 45-59.
- Reagan, T. 2004. Objectification, Positivism and Language Studies: A Reconsideration. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. **1** (1), pp.41-60.
- Rehberg Sedo, D. 2003. Readers in Reading Groups: An Online Survey of Face-to-Face and Virtual Book Clubs. *Convergence*, **9**, pp. 66-90.
- Rehberg Sedo, D. ed. 2011. "I used to read anything that caught my eye, but ...": Cultural authority and intermediaries in a virtual young adult book club. In: *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 101-122.
- Richardson, B. 2006. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Riordan, P. 2016. Freedom of Expression, No Matter What? *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*. **105** (418), pp.159-168.
- Rogers, A. 2015. Crossing 'other cultures'? Reading Tatamkhulu Afrika's 'Nothing's Changed' in the NEAB Anthology. *English in Education*, **49** (1), pp.80-93.
- Rokem, F. 2009. Theatres in America: Brecht and Kafka. In: Jestrovic, S. and Meerzon, Y. eds. *Performance, Exile and 'America'*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 119-133.
- Rothberg, M. 2008. Decolonizing Trauma Studies. *Studies in the Novel*. **40** (1-2), pp.224-234.
- Rubinson, G. J. 2004. Revisiting *The Satanic Verses*: Rushdie's Desacralizing Treatment of the Koran as a Literary Intertext. *E-rea: Revue électronique d'études sur le monde anglophone*. **2** (1), pp.122-27.
- Rupp, S. 2008. Africa and China: Engaging Postcolonial Interdependencies. In: Rothberg, R. I. ed. *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, pp.65-86.

- Rushdie, S. 1982. The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance. *The Times*. 3 July, p.8.
- Rushdie, S. 1989. My Book Speaks for Itself. *The New York Times*. 17 February, p.39.
- Rushdie, S. 1991. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta.
- Rushdie, S. 2006. [1988]. *The Satanic Verses*. London: Vintage.
- Rushdie, S. 2013. *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. London: Vintage Books.
- Ruthven, M. 1990. *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Ruthven, M. 2002. *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America*. London: Granta.
- Saha, A. 2016. The Rationalizing/Racializing Logic of Capital in Cultural Production. *Media Industries*. **3** (1), pp.1-16.
- Said, E. 1993. *Culture and Imperialism*. London and New York: Vintage.
- Said, E. 2003 [1978]. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Sanu, S. 2005. Re-imagining Religious Freedom. *Manushi*. **150**, pp.4-12.
- Sayyid, S. 2014. Khomeini and the Decolonization of the Political. In: Adib-Moghaddam, A. ed. *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.275-290.
- Schaffer, K. and Smith, S. 2004. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schultz, K. 1998. Utopias from Hell: Brecht's 'Mahagonny' and Adorno's 'Treasure of Indian Joe'. *Monatshefte*. **90** (3), pp.307-316.
- Sedgwick, E. K. 2002. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Shawcross, J. T. 1998. 'Connivers and the Worst of Superstitions': Milton on Popery and Toleration. *Literature & History*. **7** (2), pp.51-69.
- Shiffrin, A. 1999. *The Business of Books: How the International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read*. London: Verso.
- Shoko, T. 2016. *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Simmons, D. S. 2012. *Modernizing Medicine in Zimbabwe: HIV/AIDS and Traditional Healers*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Siziba, G. 2017. Reading Zimbabwe's Structural and Political violence through the Trope of the Unnameable and Unnamed in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. *Literator*. **38** (1), pp.1-9.
- Slaughter, B. 2005. Zimbabwe: Mugabe's 'Operation Murambatsvina'. *World Socialist Web Site*. [Online]. 16 July. [Accessed 02 August]. Available from: <https://www.wsws.org/>

- Solms, M. and Nersessian, E. 1999. Freud's Theory of Affect: Questions for Neuroscience. *Neuropsychanalysis*. 1(1), pp.5-14.
- Sperlinger, T. 2015. Fellows Find: Doris Lessing correspondence deepens insight into The Grass is Singing. *Ransom Center Magazine*. [Online]. 15 October. [Accessed 23 April 2019]. Available from: <https://sites.utexas.edu/ransomcentermagazine/2015/10/15/doris-lessing-correspondence-deepens-insight-into-the-grass-is-singing/>
- Spivak, G. 1999. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. 1987. *In Other Worlds: Essay in Cultural Politics*. London and New York: Methuen.
- Spivak, G. C. 1989. Reading *The Satanic Verses*. *Public Culture*. 2 (1), pp.79-99.
- Spivak, G. C. 1993. The Politics of Translation. In: *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, pp.179-200.
- Spivak, G. C. 1997. Translator's Preface. In: Derrida, J. ed. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, ix-lxxxvii.
- Spivak, G. C. 2006. Close Reading. *PMLA*. 121 (5), pp. 1608-1617.
- Spyra, A. 2016. On Labors of Love and Language Learning: Xiaolu Guo Rewriting the Monolingual Family Romance. *Studies in the Novel*. 48 (4) pp.444-461.
- Squires, C. 2007. *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Squires, C. 2012. Too Much Rushdie, Not Enough Romance? The UK Publishing Industry and BME (Black Minority Ethnic) Readership. In: Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp. 99-111.
- Srivastava, N. 2010. Anthologizing the Nation: Literature Anthologies and the Idea of India. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 46 (2), pp.151-163.
- Srivastava, N. 2012. Reading After Terror: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist and First-World Allegory*. In: Benwell, B., Procter, J. and Robinson, G. eds. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*. London: Routledge, pp.171-183.
- Stadtler, F. ed. 2014. *The Satanic Verses and Shree 420: Negotiating Identity through Indian Popular Cinema*. In: *Fiction, Film, and Indian Popular Cinema*. London: Routledge, pp.85-109.
- Staels, E. H. 2004. The Indefinite You. *English Studies*. 85 (2), pp.161-176.
- Stockwell, P. 2002. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Taheri, A. 1989. Khomeini's scapegoat. *The Times*. 15 February, p.14.
- Taylor, C. 1989. The Rushdie Controversy. *Public Culture*. 2 (1), pp. 118-22.
- The Bible: authorised King James version.*

- The Blasphemer's Banquet*, by Tony Harrison. 1989. BBC 1 [Channel 4], 31 July, n.t.
- The Blasphemers' Banquet*. 1989. BBC 1, 31 July.
- The Bookseller. 1989. Penguin, the hawks and the ostrich. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer*. 16 September, p.23.
- The Reading Agency. 2019. Reading facts. *Readingagency.org.uk*. [Online]. Accessed 29 April 2019. Available from: <https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/#fn24>
- The Ruts. 1979. Babylon's Burning. *The Crack*. [Sound recording]. Townhouse Studies: Virgin.
- The Satanic Verses: 30 Years On*. 2019. BBC 2, 16 March, 02:25.
- Thumb, Y-F. J. 2002. Dictionary Look-up strategies and the Bilingualised Learners' Dictionary: A Think-Aloud Study. PhD Thesis, University of Hong Kong.
- Tomkins, S. 1962. *Affect Imagery Consciousness: Volume I, The Positive Affects*. London: Tavistock.
- Tomkins, S. 1963. *Affect Imagery Consciousness: Volume II, The Negative Affects*. New York: Springer.
- Tomkins, S. 1991. *Affect Imagery Consciousness Volume III, The Negative Affects: Anger and Fear*. New York: Springer.
- Toth, H. G. 2019. [Pre-print]. Spivak's Planerarity and the Limits of Professional Reading. *Comparative Critical Studies*. 24p.
- Toth, H. G. and Nicholls, B. 2019. [Pre-print]. A Dialectical Literary Canon? *African Identities*. 42p.
- Trudgill, P. 1999. Standard English: what it isn't. In: Bex, T. and Watts, R.J. eds. *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.117-128.
- Turner, Victor. 1977. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Cornell: Cornell Paperbacks.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2019. *Literacy*. [Online]. [Accessed 30 April 2019]. Available from: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy>
- Venuti, L. 2004. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London: Routledge.
- Vidino, L. ed. 2010. Great Britain. In: *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 114-146.
- Vines, A. and Campos, I. 2010. China and India in Angola. In: Cheru, F. and Obi, C. eds. *The Rise of China and India in Africa*. London and New York: Zed Books, pp. 193-207.
- Visser, I. 2011. Trauma Theory and Postcolonial Literary Studies. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 47 (3), pp.270–282.
- Voltaire. 2015 [1741]. *Le fanatisme, ou Mahomet le Prophète*. [Online]. Accessed 22 October 2019. Available from: <http://www.theatre-classique.fr>

- Vukovich, D. F. 2012. *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the P.R.C.* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Wainaina, B. 2005. How to Write about Africa. *Granta*. 92, p.4.
- Walgrave, S., Rucht, D. and Van Aelst, P. 2010. New Activists or Old Leftists?: The Demographics of Protesters. In: Walgrave, S. and Rucht, D. eds. *The World Says No to War: Demonstrations Against the War on Iraq*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, pp.78-97.
- Walkowitz, R. L. 1999. Shakespeare in Harlem: *The Norton Anthology*, 'Propaganda,' Langston Hughes. *Modern Language Quarterly*. **60** (4), pp.495-519.
- Walkowitz, R. L. 2006. The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Writer. *Contemporary Literature*. **47** (1), pp.527-45.
- Wallis, K. 2016. How Books Matter: Kwani Trust, Farafina, Cassava Republic Press and the Medium of Print. *Wasafiri*. **31** (4), pp.39-46.
- Waring, W. 1995. Is this your book? Wrapping Postcolonial Fiction for the Global Market. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/ Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*. **22** (3-4), pp.455-466.
- Warner, M. 2004. Uncritical Reading. In: Gallop, J. ed. *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*. New York and London: Routledge, pp.13-38.
- Waugh, P. ed. 2003. What is metafiction and why are they saying such awful things about it? In: *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*. London: Routledge, pp.1-20.
- Webster, R. 1990. *A Brief History of Blasphemy: Liberalism, Censorship and 'The Satanic Verses'*. Oxford: Orwell Press.
- Weldon, F. 1989. *Sacred Cows*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Weller, P. 2009. *A Mirror for Our Times: 'The Rushdie Affair' and the Future of Multiculturalism*. London: Continuum.
- Wenzel, C. H. 2007. Chinese Language, Chinese Mind? In: *Cultures: Conflict - Analysis - Dialogue, Proceedings of the 29th International Ludwig Wittgenstein-Symposium in Kirchberg, Austria*. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, pp. 295-314.
- Werth, P. 1999. *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Wicomb, Z. 2016. Heterotopia and Placelessness in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. In: Palladino, M. and Miller, J. eds. *The Globalization of Space*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 49-64.
- Wilson, G. M. 1994. Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading. *Philosophy and Literature*. **18** (2), pp.265-273.
- Woolley, A. 2017. Narrating the 'Asylum Story': Between Literary and Legal Storytelling. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. **19** (3), pp.376-394.

World Bank. 2019. *Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above)*. [Online]. [Accessed 30 April 2019]. Available from: <https://databank.worldbank.org/data/Adult-literacy-rates/id/9995211>

Young, J. K. 2006. *Black Writers, White Publishers: Marketplace Politics in Twentieth-Century African American Literature*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.

Young, R. J. C. 2001. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Zezeza, P. T. 2006. The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications. In: Arasanyin, O. F. and Pemberton, M. A. eds. *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, pp.14-26.